

DBC Member Spotlight: Nancy Collins, PhD, RD, LDN, FAPWCA

Interview conducted by: Terri J. Raymond, MA, RD, CD



Nancy Collins, PhD, RD, LD/N, FAPWCA needs no introduction. Dr. Collins is renowned in the world of nutrition and dietetics as a speaker,

writer, educator, and business entrepreneur. Among her many other achievements, Dr. Collins created www.RD411.com, now known as www.Nutrition411.com. Regarding this accomplishment she says, "My goal is for dietitians and health care professionals to spend less time redeveloping every handout so they will have more time to spend with patients and clients. We can improve health care outcomes by having quality materials available for everyone to utilize. The Internet makes this global library possible."

What role does technology play in your success?

I founded three major businesses over the past 25 years. When I first started out, technology didn't exist the way it does today and everything was done over the telephone or even via the US mail. I look back on those days and wonder how we got anything done! I like to work quickly so when email first began, I was very curious to see how I could utilize it to get more done in a shorter period of time. I was always an early adopter of technology with my first love being personal digital assistants (PDAs). I am a detail-oriented person so, when I heard about little gadgets that could keep track of lists, dates, calendars, and contacts, I was all over that! I read everything I could about this concept and taught myself about a wide variety of technology topics. Of course, at that time I didn't know the tremendous role technology would eventually

have on every aspect of daily life but my natural interest and curiosity positioned me well for the future. Today, technology shapes almost everything I do. One of my largest current projects is nutrition411.com, which has grown far bigger than I ever anticipated. The Internet allowed me to create a destination site that is well known to dietitians and health care providers and allows them to access reliable, downloadable, customizable resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I don't believe you can be a successful entrepreneur these days without utilizing technology to propel your ideas and business ventures. I continue to market my businesses and connect with people every day using social media, blogs, texts, email, and still the occasional phone call but now I even have digital phone service. I embraced technology right from the start and it has allowed me to be successful on an international scale rather than simply a local one. That is perhaps the biggest difference technology has made in my career – it opened the whole world to me.

How do we, the members of Dietitians in Business and Communications, ensure that we stay on the cutting edge of technology?

The easiest way to stay on top of technology advances is reading. I subscribe to several computer magazines and learn a little bit more every time a new issue arrives. Even if you just flip through the ads, you will see what is hot and new and what people are talking about. Most state dietetic associations offer at least a few sessions on technology at their annual meetings. We have had sessions on everything from electronic health records to

mobile phones at our dietetic association meeting and these sessions have been a great opportunity for learning. I coordinate the Nutrition Informatics blog for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics so reading that is another way to stay in the loop. The blog is accessible to the public from the bottom of the home page at eatright.org. I recently completed the biomedical informatics program offered in partnership from the Academy and the Oregon Health and Science University so formal classes are additional way to educate yourself. I recently added a technology section to nutrition411.com so there is another resource.

You recently attended and lectured at the Healthcare Information Management and Systems Society (HIMSS) conference. Tell us a little about your experience.

The HIMSS meeting was a great experience but I must admit that a lot of it was over my head. The complexity of bringing technology to all aspects of the health care system is somewhat overwhelming. Lindsey Hoggle and I gave the first nutrition lecture this meeting has had and it went very well. Our goal was to simply introduce the idea of using technology to improve the nutritional status of the population and I believe we succeeded in getting this message across.

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You have already accomplished so much for the good of our profession, what's next? What do you most look forward to in the future?

I can't spill the beans but I have two more businesses mapped out. One is a serious business using an aspect of technology that is just coming into vogue and the other is a more fun and playful venture for our profession. I only have a loose timetable mapped out for these but I will get them up and running in the future. Meanwhile, I am writing a book on long-term care and I have to get that done first or my publisher will be quite upset. As many people know, I do quite a bit of legal work involving patients suing for malpractice, negligence and wrongful death. This work, as well as my own clinical career and personal family history, has given me a unique insight into the patient experience. If I had total

freedom, I would spend all my time using technology to improve the patient experience.

You have served the Academy in many ways, what is most memorable and why?

This is a hard question because I have really enjoyed the vast majority of my volunteer positions. I have held leadership positions for the past 23 years continuously and I guess I would stop accepting these positions if I didn't enjoy them and believe it was time well spent. If I had to pick my most favorite, it was being president of the Florida Dietetic Association (FDA). As president, I was able to execute my ideas and make substantial changes in the way FDA operated. I am proud to say many of those changes continue to this day even though I was president 12 years ago.

We have only touched on you, your history and your many achievements. Where can we find out more about you and your countless accomplishments?

You can find me all over the Internet! My personal web site is www.drnancycollins.com. I tweet daily on Twitter @RD411. You can "like" nutrition411.com on Facebook at RD411fan or follow our boards on Pinterest. I also have a YouTube channel, a LinkedIn page, a personal Facebook page, a blog and of course, www.nutrition411.com. And finally, I am always happy to get emails and try to answer all of them within 24 hours. My email address is NCtheRD@aol.com. Whew – no wonder I am tired!

