



EPISODE 5: Q&A Tuesday - Diet Therapy as the Primary Intervention

Transcript

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Hey there. It's Q&A Tuesday where I give you the answers to your very important questions. This weeks question comes from a conversation I had with a student over a question she had when studying for the RD Exam. This was a great question because it emphasizes the importance of breaking down a question using critical thinking skills.

I'm going to bring this up over and over again because I can't stress enough how important critical thinking skills are for not only the exam but in your career. And the good news is that you have it in you. Sometimes it might be buried so if that's the case, we're bringing it back my friend so you can pass the exam the first time and be the best version of yourself. I sure like the sound of that.

Trust me when I say this. You can do hard things and you have the knowledge to pass and be able to think critically. So let's get started.

[Music and Intro]

This question came right as one of my students was about to take the exam and wasn't sure how to answer it properly. The question wasn't a memorize the answer type question and I gotta say this, rarely are the questions that simple. You usually can't just memorize your way through the exam. And this my friend was a prime example of it. Because in real life, most of the things you need to memorize can be easily looked up. The purpose of the exam is to prove that you can think critically as an entry-level dietitian and be able to process the information presented to you.

And that's exactly what this was. This question wanted to know that you can think about each of the answers and make the best guess. There's no memorizing here. It's all knowledge and processing information.

So let's say you're asked to identify a condition where the main or primary intervention is diet therapy. You're then asked to look at a couple conditions and determine which one is dependent on following a specific diet as the main treatment option. That's the key part of this question. Now, say the options you can choose from are 1) Stage 5 Chronic Kidney Disease, 2) Stomach Cancer, 3) Type 1 Diabetes or 4) Galactosemia.

When you initially look at your options, you might think well, they all require nutrition intervention and require modifications to the diet. You're absolutely right. Every possible answer is a condition that requires diet modification. But the question didn't ask what condition requires nutrition intervention. It asked what condition requires nutrition intervention as the main or primary intervention. So let's go through the options.

Stage 5 CKD or Chronic Kidney Disease requires patients to follow a renal diet. And at that stage, they're likely dependent on dialysis either hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis. So they might be on a dialysis diet. The diet is super important but dialysis is what's keeping the patient alive. The patient also probably is taking medications. So there's a lot going on that doesn't involve the diet so it's not the main or primary intervention.

Moving on to the next possible answer which was stomach cancer. At this point, we don't know the status of this patient or what type of nutrition they're receiving but it's very likely they're getting medication and cancer treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation. They might be getting nutrition support too but it's safe to say that this patient isn't just being managed nutritionally with a cancer diagnosis.

The next option was Type 1 Diabetes. Again, modifying the diet and counting carbohydrates becomes second nature for people living with type 1 diabetes but these people cannot live a healthy life without insulin. So again. Nutrition is important but it's not the only thing keeping the patient alive and well.

The last option is galactosemia. So what is galactosemia. Ooh, gotta love it when genetics. It reminds me of my days working in genetics. Well, galactosemia is an inborn error of metabolism which means the individual is born with the condition where they cannot metabolize or breakdown galactose. Now going back to your chemistry and metabolism courses, galactose is a sugar. The name gives it away because it ends in "ose" which means sugar. Galactose is a monosaccharide or a simple sugar. It's absorbed and metabolized in that form. So where does galactose come from? Galactose comes from the breakdown of lactose which is a disaccharide. Di meaning 2. So when lactose is broken down by lactase, the two monosaccharides remaining are galactose and glucose. This is a problem for people with galactosemia because the galactose is toxic to the body and builds up. Just when you thought all those classes you took you'd never need, well, here it is coming back in your world. So this means that people with galactosemia can't eat lactose or other foods that contain free galactose which is mostly found in fruit, beans and seeds. Also the food additive, carrageenan, which is primarily used to thicken, emulsify and preserve foods, must be excluded from the diet. As long as there's good dietary compliance, a diet that's free of galactose, that's really the main intervention or treatment for people with galactosemia.

So let's circle back to the question. What condition has diet therapy as the main or primary intervention? Well, Stage 5 Chronic Kidney Disease requires dialysis, stomach cancer requires cancer treatment and Type 1 diabetes requires insulin as part of the treatment. Galactosemia can be managed by following a strict galactose-free diet so the correct answer is Galactosemia.

As you can see, this question couldn't be answered by memorizing a question. Chances are, this exact question wouldn't be asked on the exam. I've taken many exams and sample test questions are great, but exact study questions have rarely shown up on any of the exams. What I recommend you do is use the questions as a guide. So going back to this question. Do what I did. Ask yourself, do I understand each potential answer and if the answer is no, take the time to learn and understand what each possible answer means. For example, if you've never heard of Stage 5 CKD, take the time to look it up and learn about it. The exact question may not be asked on the real exam but what might happen is you could be asked a question that pertains to one of the possible answers in a practice test question and if you take the time to understand the possible answers, then you'll be on the right track to answer correctly.

So there you have it. That's the Answer to your Question. If you have a question you'd like featured on the RD Made Easy Podcast, send it my way. You'll find the link to submit your question in the show notes. Stay on top of your study game. There's no limits to achieving the success you so deeply desire. Until next time my friend.

[Music and Outro]