

Robson Hidalgo

Personal statement

My relationship with food and my health has been forever altered due to my fight and victory over two cancers, the kidney, and the chest. It was more of a psychological and emotional experience than a physical one. I had to dig deep, access inner reserves I didn't even know I had, and make subtle but meaningful changes in my lifestyle to help heal me. I also learned that nutrition is not only about eating healthy foods. Nutrition also entails giving the body what it needs to heal, get stronger, and thrive. A dietary and lifestyle change helped me heal. This led me to consider even more that food is not only survival food; it's a way of relating to others, learning about other cultures, and healing. It inspired me to make it my lifelong career to teach people, especially those with medical conditions, how to live better and more independent lives.

I have received both didactic training and experiential education to prepare myself for my professional career as a clinical dietitian. As a senior student at Queens College of the City University of New York (CUNY Queens College) pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and Nutrition and Exercise Sciences (graduation date: May 2025, GPA: 3.76), I have also had rigorous coursework in food science, medical nutrition therapy, and sustainability. Outside the classroom, I have sought opportunities to make a difference for others in need. Most fulfilling has been working with Mount Sinai Morningside's Meal Assistance Program (June 2024 – April 2025). Through volunteering, I provide patients with increased ease of meals, socialization, and menu selection assistance. Direct observation of how dietary changes affected patients during their recovery also made me decide to further my studies in oncology nutrition.

One has to have technical skills and, at the same time, communicative skills, ethical awareness, and the temerity to bond with different kinds of people. My best assets are empathy, reasoning, and group work, yet I also understand that I should improve my public speaking and business ethics. To achieve these, I have placed a challenge on delivering speeches at events, participating in debating topics, and taking public education classes. Also, I plan to receive further education and mentoring as a general dietitian.

In addition to practice and education, I am purposefully involved in extracurricular and career practice that improve my skills and knowledge base. I am an active member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and its subgroup, Oncology Nutrition. Attending conferences such as FNCE 2024 in Minneapolis helped me bridge up with current studies and technologies on dietetics. In the Fall of 2024, I joined the QC Dietetics Club (Fall 2024), which provides networking opportunities and real-world experience.

My short-term objectives are to obtain a Bachelor of Exercise Sciences and Nutrition and Dietetics and a Dietetic Internship (DI) placement. For my graduate year, I would instead invest more time cultivating my counseling abilities and be exposed more to field-based training in the hospital and outpatient settings through the internship.

Upon successful completion of my internship, I aspire to be a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) working in a healthcare or community nutrition setting. It would be a joy for me to advise patients on their diet, especially chronic or post-critical disease patients.

My long-term professional goal is to become an oncology and community nutrition specialist. Observing the impact of diet on disease outcomes firsthand in my own life, I am attracted to helping cancer patients optimize their nutrition so that they can tolerate therapy and recover. I also wish to contribute to research, identifying how specific nutritional interventions can maximize patient outcomes and create nutrition programs that provide evidence-based diet education in under-resourced communities.

This is a networked profession with ongoing development and continuous learning. In order to stay up-to-date and active, I will get a mentor, continue to volunteer and attend professional conferences. I will self-monitor by soliciting feedback, evaluating my performance, and modifying my method when needed.

To me, being an RDN is a calling and a career. It's a chance to bring about positive change in people's lives through nutrition, educate individuals and populations, and help bring about research progress that leads to better health care. I am excited to embark on the new chapter and opportunity to help bring good change to dietetic practice.