“Path of change”: Patients’ experiences of dietetic consultations and their implications on the dietitian's role
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Introduction
At present, there is little research exploring patients’ experiences in dietetic consultations. There is, however, considerable interest in healthcare research to study the relationship between carers’ communication skills and patient-centered care approach to improved clinical effectiveness and patient outcome. Understanding patients’ experiences of clinical consultations can help clinicians review and modify their patient care approach to improving effectiveness and outcome.

Objectives
The objective of the study is to collect patients’ experiences in dietetic consultations in order to facilitate dietary changes using qualitative analysis.

Methodology
Patients who attended dietetic consultations were individually invited to describe their experiences of the consultations. Patients’ views were transcribed, grouped and coded using content analysis.

Result
Fifteen patients participated in the study and were asked to describe their experiences on their dietetic consultations. The results revealed that their experiences varied and were influenced by factors such as (i) information given (resources, explanation, repetition, consistency); (ii) dietitian’s care approach (prescriptive or non-prescriptive); (iii) dietitian’s behavior (listening skills, body language); (iv) appointment arrangement (expectations, involvement of multidisciplinary team, length of duration); and (v) their own personal experiences (confidence, guilt, frustration).
Participants of the study further pointed out that certain factors were particularly important, such as dietitian’s communication skills; rapport with dietitian; provision of effective and reliable information and resources by dietitian; show of support and understanding their needs and non-judgemental attitude by dietitian. Moreover, continual support by the dietitian in terms of shorter interval between follow up appointment, telephone or email follow up would also help create positive experiences of the patients’ dietetic consultations. This study expands the current knowledge of patients’ views of their consultation experiences, which are important in understanding patients and helping dietitians deliver consultations with appropriate patient-centred approach in a positive, sensitive and supportive way.