



Media Release

6 November 2008

Charting the Course to Recovery -

Eating Disorders Expert Provides Clarity to Carers

A leading practitioner on caring for adolescents and children with eating disorders will be visiting Melbourne to provide the latest information on caring for young people with this serious health issue.

Clinical Nurse Leader Gillian Todd from the Maudsley Hospital in London will be running a weekend workshop for family carers in early December this year.

Hosted by Eating Disorders Victoria, the weekend workshop is designed to give family carers a number of strategies to support a family member with an eating disorder based on the 'Maudsley Approach' treatment program. It is the first time to be offered in Australia.

The prevalence of eating disorders in the western world is becoming an increasingly significant health issue, affecting many people in Australia. Some estimates indicate that two to three in every 100 Australian females meets the diagnostic criteria for anorexia or bulimia nervosa, while approximately one in 5 Australian women have symptoms of binge eating disorder.

One of the most common complaints from parents and families is that many experience a long and frustrating search for information and support which only further adds to the stress in families trying to cope.

Gillian Todd says that the complex psychological and physical nature of eating disorders and the long-term treatment that is required means that a patient's family is integral to recovery.

"Eating disorders can develop into serious mental health illnesses so they are bewildering to patients, their families and the general community. People often have no idea what to do when faced with a child with an eating disorder and often struggle to find support," said Ms Todd.

"No matter how much work is done in hospitals, patients go home to their families and primary carers. Over decades, research has shown that parents and families are fundamental to the recovery process and this workshop will help provide them with the tools they need," she said.

Eating Disorders Victoria's Family Support Officer, Helen Franks, says that with the increasing prevalence of eating disorders in the community, parents and partners need assistance in understanding of the nature of this illness and how to support a person with an eating disorder, whether they are an adolescent or an adult.

"There are so many myths about eating disorders in the community. Eating disorders are a chronic illness – not a lifestyle choice, a diet gone wrong or a fad."

“We know that early treatment is the key to recovery for eating disorders sufferers and the Maudsley Approach is a frontrunner in treatment programs. This is a great opportunity for people to receive the latest information from a leading professional who has vast experience in the field,” Ms Franks says.

The Carer’s Weekend Workshop is open to people who are supporting a family member with an eating disorder (from children to early adulthood).

Ends.

Carer’s Workshop for people with Eating Disorders:
Saturday 6th and 7th of December. 9.00am to 4.30pm
Edmund Rice Room, Treacy Conference Centre
126 The Avenue, Parkville.
To book and register – Telephone: (03) 9885 6563

For information on the Maudsley Approach: <http://www.maudsleyparents.org/>

Eating Disorders Helpline: 1300 550 236

For further information or interviews please call: Meredith Kelly – 0417 543 880 or
Megan O’Connor – 0409 948 049
Website: www.eatingdisorders.org.au

Background information

Eating disorders

- Approximately 5 per cent of the Australian population suffer from an eating disorder, including people as young as seven and as old as 70.
- Eating disorders are a serious mental illness.
- Anorexia is the third most common chronic illness in Australian adolescent girls (after asthma and obesity).
- Sufferers typically deny they have an eating disorder making treatment of eating disorders complex and time consuming.
- 92% of people with bulimia said that seeking help was entirely their own choice whereas only 19% of people with anorexia agreed.
- Of personal (non-professional) calls to the Eating Disorders Helpline, 60 per cent of calls were from a family member, partner or friend of the person with the eating disorder.
- The average duration of anorexia is 7 years. Those who recover are unlikely to return to normal health.
- Dieting is the greatest risk factor for the development of an eating disorder.

New Maudsley treatment model

- In the Maudsley and New Maudsley approach, relationships and communication are the keys to the successful treatment of the eating disorder.
- The Maudsley treatment approach originated out of the Maudsley Hospital in London (1996) and was originally developed as a treatment approach for 12-18 year olds, living at home. The program was designed to give parents the skills to be in control of the treatment of their adolescent in the home environment.
- Maudsley places parents as the experts in the young person's life.
- The family carry out the goal of restoring the young person to health in the home setting.
- The New Maudsley method was developed out of the need for a Maudsley style approach that could be adapted to suit people over 18 years of age.
- For carers of adults with an eating disorder, the New Maudsley method focuses on communication, education about eating disorders, creating an atmosphere of support and the modelling of positive behaviours from the carer. It teaches the carer how to be a support person and to build their confidence in how to handle their situation.
- Both treatments focus on the restoration of healthy weight and normalising eating and exercise behaviours and supports a gradual independence from therapy.