



Danielle Maloney
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Welcome to the first edition of a new newsletter for the Statewide Eating Disorders Steering Committee.

This newsletter will be issued quarterly and will feature stories from local health district eating disorder services across NSW.

The NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders 2013–2018 is a world first in identifying and planning services for eating disorders at a population level.

I am honoured and humbled to be part of this journey towards improving services for people with eating disorders right across NSW, and can proudly report that every local health district across NSW has submitted a plan for improving eating disorders services locally. This is a big step forward.

But we can't expect local health districts to deliver care without the appropriate knowledge, skills and support.

At the Centre for Eating and Dieting Disorders, based at the University of Sydney, we are rolling out an Eating Disorder Workforce Development Program across the state with funding from the Ministry of Health. There are nine training packages in the planning, with the first six due to start this year, covering a wide range of disciplines and settings from community to inpatient. This is a very ambitious task as there are generally multiple entry points and services involved in the care of eating disorder patients.

Together we will achieve great things.

Until next time, *Danielle*



Success... social workers Diana Priest and Tim Kicuroski.

A bridge for those in need

It's been six months since social workers Tim Kicuroski and Diana Priest launched their first carers' group for families of patients with eating disorders – and it couldn't be more successful.

The group runs monthly at the Peter Beumont Unit in the Professor Marie Bashir Centre at RPA and has provided a vital space for families to share their concerns and seek support from Tim, Diana and each other.

"Carers often feel disconnected and alone, and many do not even know they are carers," says Diana. We ask them how they are caring for themselves, and make them feel that they are being attended to. And we acknowledge the incredible support and work they put in."

Some families say it is the first eating disorder service where they've been given space to talk, says Tim.

"We give them a voice in the treatment plan because they often don't feel like they can interrupt the nurses and doctors as they are so busy," he says.

Both Tim and Diana focus strongly on trauma as part of the model of care used in the Missenden Mental Health Service

"Many patients with eating disorders have experienced trauma such as childhood sexual abuse or neglect so we get them to understand the impact that has on their bodies. We also teach them to tolerate stress, sit with their anxiety and to assert themselves."

Both also work individually with patients and their families, providing everything from couples counselling to conflict resolution.

"I love getting in the middle of the conflict because if we don't resolve that before the patient goes home, they will stop eating again and be re-admitted," says Tim.

Help at hand for GPs

Helping general practitioners navigate the health system and find the right referral pathways for patients with eating disorders has long been a challenge.

But with HealthPathways Sydney, life has become easier.

HealthPathways Sydney is an online local health information portal to support local GPs and clinicians while they are seeing their patients. It provides information on how to assess and manage medical conditions, and how to refer patients to local specialists and services in the most timely way.

Three pathways have been developed for eating disorders (anorexia nervosa, bulimia and Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorders). Written by Alexandria-based GP Simon Cowap, the pathways provide information for both public and private referral and support options for adults and children.

"Even though eating disorders are not an everyday presentation in general practice, the view rate of the pathways is frequent with over 150 page views over the last six months to the four clinical pathways and over 100 to the referral information pages," says Dr Cowap, who has more than 20 years' experience in medicine and an interest in mental health.



GP Simon Cowap

"As with a lot of mental health symptoms, patients don't always volunteer that they are restricting, bingeing or purging, but if you ask these symptoms are actually quite common.

If that support is easily available, the consultation is more effective

"Sometimes, these behaviours are quite mild and part of a more generalised presentation, but they can be extremely severe. And because these are complex, anxiety provoking disorders that most of us don't understand very well, perhaps GPs don't ask often enough about symptoms of disordered eating," says Dr Cowap.



"And when we do become aware of them, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and uncertain what to do next. That's when I hope the HealthPathways Sydney eating disorders pages can really help.

"Like all our pages, they're designed to provide concise, practical information during the consultation.

"When developing them I always try and think in terms of what I really need to know as a GP confronted by this problem in my rooms. How do I assess the patient, what are the important management issues and most importantly how do I get advice and access to specialist services?

The three eating disorders pathways are regularly reviewed and feedback from users is easy and always welcomed.



WHERE TO GET HELP

In an emergency:

Please call **000** or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

24-hour support can also be found at the following:

- Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511 (NSW)
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- Suicide call back service (National): 1300 659 46
- Healthdirect Australia: 1800 022 222

Find a practitioner or get information:



<http://cedd.org.au>



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