Through Thick and Thin: Exploring Effective Social Work / Social Service Work Practice with Eating Disorders

Presenter: April Gates, M.S.W., RSW, Program Co-ordinator, Eating Disorders Program, Homewood Health Inc.
Sue Graham, M.S.W., RSW, Eating Disorder Clinician, CMHA - WWD

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Once upon a time...

“I wanted to be healthier so I cut out junk food and became more aware of what I was eating. Before I knew it, I started to become very preoccupied with my food choices, and felt guilty after eating something that I thought was ‘bad’. Now I can’t seem to get myself to eat… and I freak out if I cannot exercise. I cannot believe that it got this far.”
## Continuum of Disordered Eating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unrestrained Eating</th>
<th>Disordered Eating</th>
<th>Clinical Eating Disorder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Body Positive</td>
<td>• Self-conscious or concerns about eating</td>
<td>• Engage in behaviours to control weight – dieting, etc.</td>
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<td>• Food is not an issue</td>
<td>• Express body dissatisfaction Focus on body weight and/or shape</td>
<td>• Rigid eating patterns and/or exercise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• May engage in weighing self; some food restricting or calorie counting</td>
<td>• May experience binge eating</td>
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<td>• Good and bad day is determined by eating and exercise</td>
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Anorexia Nervosa

- Restriction of energy intake leading to a significantly low body weight
- Intense fear of weight gain
- Body image distortion
- Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape/weight
- Lack of recognition of the seriousness of low body weight
Bulimia Nervosa

- Recurrent periods of binge eating and perceived lack of control during episode
- Recurrent compensatory behaviours in order to prevent weight gain (vomiting, laxatives, diuretics, fasting, excessive exercise)
- Self evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape/weight
Binge – Eating Disorder

• Recurrent episodes of binge eating and perceived lack of control during episode.

• ≥ 3 of:
  • Eating rapidly
  • Eating until uncomfortably full
  • Eating amounts when not hungry
  • Eating alone due to embarrassment
  • Feeling disgusted, depressed, guilty

• Binge eating occurs at least once a week for 3 months
Other Specified Eating Disorder

- Presentations do not meet full diagnostic criteria
  - Atypical A.N. – not have low weight
  - B.N. of low frequency and/or limited duration
  - BED of low frequency and/or limited duration
  - Purging disorder without binge eating
  - Night eating syndrome
Signs of an Eating Disorder Checklist

When do I need to take action? When do I need to seek professional help?
Poor body image can lead to disordered eating/exercise behaviours and ultimately, to an eating disorder. The earlier any of these concerns are treated by a professional, the greater the chance for success.

- Obsessed with appearance, food or exercise
- Constantly weighing him/herself
- Has an intense fear of gaining weight
- Change in weight or fluctuations in weight
- Preoccupied with food, constantly looking at food labels for calories and fat content
- Avoids certain foods
- Avoids eating with others
- Skips meals
- Makes excuses for not eating
- Lies about eating habits
- Hides food
- Drinks excessive amounts of water, diet soda, coffee or other non-caloric drinks

- Feels guilty when eats food
- Exercises excessively
- Wears baggy clothes to hide weight loss or to keep warm
- Changes in emotional well being: depressed or irritable, makes abusive remarks about self
- Physical symptoms including any one of: amenorrhea (loss of menstruation in girls), thinning hair, delay in onset puberty, swollen or puffy face, yellowish skin, increased cavities in teeth, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, problems with bowels (constipation or diarrhea)
- Denial of changes in behaviour
Homewood Eating Disorders Program

Team Composition

- Registered Social Workers (MSW)
- Family Therapist (MFT)
- Psychologist
- Psychiatrists
- Medical Doctor
- Registered Dietitian
- Diet Technician
- Recreation Therapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Nurses (R.N., R.P.N.)
- Chaplain
- Horticulture Therapist
- Addiction Counsellor (Consultant)
- Students
- Volunteers
CMHA – WWD Eating Disorders Program

Team Composition

• Registered Social Workers
• Psychotherapist
• Psychiatrist
• Nurse Practitioners
• Registered Dietitians
• Occupational Therapy Students
• MSW students
• Volunteers
Social Work Roles in Eating Disorders at Homewood Health

Registered Social Worker

- Assessment
- Group Leadership
- Family Therapy; Family Education and Support
- Meal Support
- Team Participation within multi-disciplinary team
- Program Development
- Research/Outcome Studies
- Conference Presentations
- Community Presentations
- Referrals to CMHA-WWD and community resources
- Discharge Planning
Social Work Roles in Eating Disorders at Homewood Health (Cont’d)

**Program Coordinator**
- Program management
- Accreditation lead
- Resource management

**Social Work Discipline Director**
- Hospital-wide social work discipline lead

**Private Practitioner**
- Individuals with Eating Disorders, family members and supportive carers
- EAP provider
Registered Social Worker

- Assessment
- Individual, family, and group therapy
- Team participation within multi-disciplinary team
- Program development
- Research/Outcome studies
- Prevention – public speaking
- Advocacy for clients
- Discharge Planning
- Referrals to Homewood and community resources
Social Work Roles in Eating Disorders in the Community

Private Practitioner

- Individuals with Eating Disorders, family members and supportive carers.
Social Work Roles
Wellington – Dufferin – Guelph Eating Disorders Coalition

• Founded in 2000
• Chair, coalition members representing various agencies and services
• Public education (EDAW, INDD events)
• Professional education

www.eatingdisorderscoalition.ca
ED Service Roadmap

Referral Source -> Homewood
- Inpatient (21 beds)
- Psychiatry
- Medical
- Dietary
- Therapy
- Support group

Homewood -> CMHA – WWD
- Nurse practitioner
- Therapy
- Dietary
- Family support

CMHA – WWD -> Community Resources
- Family support
- Agencies addressing other issues
- Private therapist
- NEDIC

Community Resources
- Inpatient (21 beds)
- Psychiatry
- Medical
- Dietary
- Therapy
- Support group
Role of Social Workers: Motivation Enhancement

- Readiness Ruler
- Mountain of Recovery
- Life raft Analogy
- Miracle Day Exercise
- 5 year Letter Exercise
Working with Children, Youth, and Adults

Social Work Role:

• Family interventions to prepare youth and their families for changes before/after transition
• Develop parental supportive role, beyond eating/weight restoration (A.N.)
• Onus on young adult to learn self-management skills and deal with life transitions
• Family based treatment
• Family education
• Work with youth and families on life transitions
• Individual/Group therapy
• Helping young adults take charge of their recovery needs
Walking the Walk

• Do you focus on your weight? Are you dieting? Use diet products? Have a scale in your house?
• Do you make comments on yours or other’s body? Do you hold a size – bias?
• Do you use exercise to compensate for eating?
As a Service Provider

• Don’t work in isolation – Team up – Communicate
• Develop close relationships with intensive treatment providers
• Investigate resources
• Don’t be afraid of what you don’t know – ask questions and borrow
Internet Resources

- **Eating Disorders Coalition** – Serving Wellington – Dufferin – Guelph includes service directory and podcasts
  
  [www.eatingdisorderscoalition.ca](http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.ca)

- **National Eating Disorder Information Centre** – promotes healthy lifestyles as an alternative to dieting; national resource directory
  
  [www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)

- **National Eating Disorders Association** – non-profit eating disorders organization
  
  [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) U.S.A

- **What’s Eating You?** – developed by Candy MacNeil, Guelph therapist, dedicated to providing accurate information about the prevention and treatment of eating disorders
  
  [www.whatseatingyou.com](http://www.whatseatingyou.com)

- **Mirror-Mirror** – eating disorder information and links
  
  [www.mirror-mirror.org](http://www.mirror-mirror.org)

- **Something-Fishy** – information on eating disorders, tips for recovery, etc.
  
  [www.something-fishy.org](http://www.something-fishy.org)
• **About-face** – information on media messages that affect self-esteem and body image
  [www.about-face.org](http://www.about-face.org)

• **Andrea’s Voice** – information on eating disorders, in memory of Andrea Smeltzer who died from complications from Bulimia
  [www.andreasvoice.org](http://www.andreasvoice.org)

• **Gürze Books** – information on books, articles etc. about eating disorder and recovery
  [www.gurze.com](http://www.gurze.com)

• **Health at Every Size** – Jon Robison’s website, helping people with weight and eating-related concerns
  [www.jonrobison.net](http://www.jonrobison.net)

• **Body Positive** - promoting the “Health At Every Size” philosophy through education and resources
  [www.bodypositive.com](http://www.bodypositive.com)

• **Show Me the Data** – information and links to resources challenging myths about obesity
  [www.showmidthedata.info](http://www.showmidthedata.info)

• **Central West Eating Disorder Program(CWEDP)**
  [www.cwedp.ca](http://www.cwedp.ca)
Resources (Cont’d)

- Danielle’s Place  
  www.daniellesplace.org
- Sheena’s Place  
  www.sheenasplace.org
- Homewood Health Centre  
  www.homewood.org
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)  
  www.mentalhealth.com
- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)  
  www.cmha.ca
- Canada’s Food Guide  
  www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html
Resources (Cont’d)

Support Centres
• Danielle’s Place – Burlington (905) 333-5548
• Sheena’s Place – Toronto (416) 927-8900
• Hope’s Garden – London (519) 434-7721

Finding a Private Practitioner
National Eating Disorders Information Centre
• Information and Resources www.nedic.ca 1-866-633-4220
• Service Provider Search Directory (416) 340-4156
Resources (Cont’d)

Specialized Treatment Contacts – CWEDP Sites

- CMHA - Guelph  (519) 821-3582
  1-800-471-1732
- Credit Valley Hospital – Mississauga (905) 813-4505
- Halton Healthcare Services –
  Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (905) 815-5127
  William Osler Health Centre, Brampton Civic Hospital (905) 453-1160

Coalitions/ Prevention

- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Eating Disorders Coalition April Gates (519) 824-1010 ext. 2292
- About Kids Health www.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/