

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Taking a LEAP forward in treating Anorexia Nervosa

Professor Phillipa Hay from the School of Medicine and a team of national and international researchers are investigating a new therapy to treat anorexia nervosa. The team will be combining cognitive behavioural therapy with LEAP (Loughborough Eating disorders Activity Therapy), a treatment that addresses the role of extreme exercise in anorexia nervosa sufferers. This research is funded by a National Health and Medical Research Council Grant.

'This study is a world-first in evaluating the efficacy of an exercise enhanced psychotherapy in treating anorexia nervosa' say Professor Hay. 'The main objective of this project is not to make patients stop exercising, but to educate them about what constitutes healthy exercise and give knowledge and skills that will allow them to regain control of their exercise behaviour. With positive results from a recent pilot study, we are optimistic this study will confirm the effectiveness of this treatment.'

An estimated 150 people will be recruited for this double-blind study through referrals and advertisements with relevant health organisations. They will be split into two treatment groups. The first group will receive, over 10 months, an evidence based manualised cognitive behavioural therapy (mCBT), which is an active treatment aimed at restoring weight and normal eating habits through changing attitudes and behaviours. The second group will receive mCBT sessions that will incorporate LEAP, which will focus on changing beliefs about excessive exercising. Before and after treatment, patients will be given questionnaires to complete, and their body mass index will be recorded. These will include information about weight-loss, exercise, mood improvement, and lack of exercise enjoyment. Researchers will analyse the data and be able to use it to strengthen treatment approaches.



Anorexia nervosa is a leading cause of early death among women, and is known for having high relapse rates. This study will introduce a positive new treatment, which will help to lower the community and personal burden of this illness - through education and attitude changes - and help sufferers live more healthy and productive lives.

Project Title: Taking a LEAP forward in the treatment of Anorexia Nervosa: A randomised controlled trial

Research Team: Prof Hay (UWS), Prof Touyz (USyd), Drs Meyer & Arcelus (Loughborough, UK), Dr Madden (USyd), Prof Pike (Temple, Japan & Columbia, New York), Dr Crosby (Fargo, US)

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Contact Details: p.hay@uws.edu.au
<http://www.uws.edu.au/medicine>

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