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Eating Disorder Diagnoses and Treatments: An Educational Symposium

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Introduction

Eating Disorders (EDs) can be categorized as follows: Anorexia Nervosa (when an individual engages in starvation to achieve weight loss), Bulimia Nervosa (when an individual engages in binge eating and subsequent self-induced vomiting to achieve weight-loss) and Binge Eating Disorder (when an individual engages in persistent over eating) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

According to the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 40% of newly identified cases of anorexia are diagnosed in women between the ages of 15 and 19, a finding that has critical implications for college-aged students. Distressingly, only one-third of individuals with anorexia and 6% of individuals with bulimia receive any type of mental health care (Hoek & van Hoeken, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of "Eating Disorder Diagnoses and Treatments: An Educational Symposium," a one-day event that was held at the University of Dayton (UD) on November 3, 2012. The goals of this symposium were to increase the attendees' knowledge about EDs and to improve their attitudes toward individuals with these disorders. The symposium was composed of presentations by health and mental health care professionals who shared research, statistics, case studies, and anecdotes and artifacts from their clinical experience. Speakers included a Psychologist, a Board-Certified Music Therapist, a Licensed Registered Dietitian, and a Registered and Board-Certified Art Therapist. In addition, a UD Music Therapy major shared personal testimony related to her own ED.

Research Questions

- What percentage of respondents will report an overall increase in knowledge about ED diagnoses and treatments?
- What percentage of respondents will report overall positive changes in attitude toward individuals with EDs?

Method

Design: Single group, pre-post survey

Participants: 47 individuals who voluntarily attended the symposium to learn more about EDs and their related treatments:

- Students and professionals from the fields of Psychology, Music Therapy, Health and Sports Sciences, Dietetics, and Art Therapy.
- Individuals who previously had or currently have a diagnosed ED.
- Individuals who have a relative or friend with a previous or current ED diagnosis.
- Attendees chose the specific presentations they wanted to attend throughout the day.

Survey Questions

Attendees answered the following questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

- How much do you currently know about the diagnostic/general information about eating disorders?
- How much do you currently know about eating disorders treatments/therapies?

For questions 3-5:

- Please rate your present attitudes toward individuals with eating disorders.
- Judgmental—Nonjudgmental
 - Apathetic—Concerned
 - Unsympathetic—Sympathetic

Procedures

- Upon arrival to the symposium attendees were instructed to complete the first 5 questions on the survey.
- Attendees completed the second (post-session) side of the survey when they left the symposium.
- Survey completion was anonymous.

Results

Figure 1. Percentages of no change, decrease, increase in knowledge about ED diagnoses.

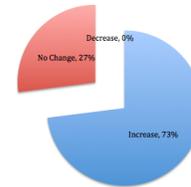


Figure 2. Percentages of no change, decrease, increase in knowledge about ED treatments.

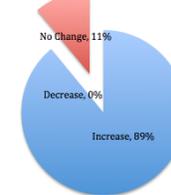


Figure 3. Percentages of no change, decrease, increase in overall knowledge about EDs.

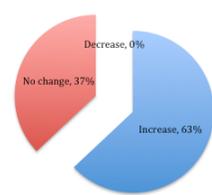


Figure 4. Percentages of no change, decrease, increase in a nonjudgmental attitude toward individuals with EDs.

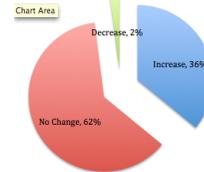


Figure 5. Percentages of no change, decrease, increase in a concerned attitude toward individuals with EDs.

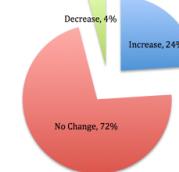


Figure 6. Percentages of no change, decrease, increase in a sympathetic attitude toward individuals with EDs.

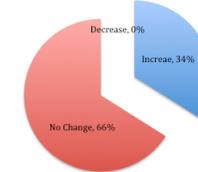
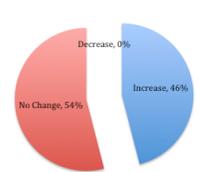


Figure 7. Percentages of respondents who indicated no change, decrease, increase in overall positive attitude toward individuals with EDs.



Conclusion and Recommendations

- This one-day educational symposium was effective in increasing attendees' knowledge about EDs and their related treatments; it was effective in improving some attendees' attitudes toward individuals with EDs; other attendees' attitudes were reported unchanged.
- No respondents reported a decrease in knowledge related to EDs and their treatments after attending the symposium.
- No respondents reported a decrease in positive attitude on all three attitudinal dimensions.
- Due to high pre-symposium attitudinal scores, reported changes in attitude were minimal.
- Results in the desired direction combined with participant feedback indicate the importance and value of collaborative symposia for future clinicians in a variety of health and mental health care professions.

References

- American Psychiatric Association (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text rev.). doi:10.1176/appi.books.9780890423349.
- Hoek, H.W., & van Hoeken, D. (2003). Review of the prevalence and incidence of eating disorders. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 36(4), 383-396.

Acknowledgements

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