

Model of a statewide service: Eating Disorders Outreach Service (EDOS)

Dr Meredith Jones is working in the Emergency Department of a regional hospital. She has just assessed Lucy, a young woman with Anorexia Nervosa. Lucy went on a diet six months ago and now feels 'out of control' and unable to eat. She has lost twenty kilograms, currently weighing 30 kg. She only eats one small meal a day, which she cannot help vomiting up. According to her parents she is compulsively exercising four hours a day. Lucy's parents tell Dr Jones they are at their wit's end in trying to get their daughter to eat and are terrified that she could die from starvation. They are hopeful they can access treatment for their daughter locally. On assessment Lucy has very low blood pressure and low pulse rate, and her blood tests show low blood glucose and low potassium, putting her at risk of imminent fatal medical deterioration. Lucy is tearful and says she doesn't want any treatment, as it will 'make her fat'. Dr Jones is very concerned about the risks of Lucy dying from malnutrition if she doesn't have treatment, but has never treated anyone with an eating disorder before. The only public specialist eating disorder inpatient service in Queensland, which is a thousand kilometres away, does not have any vacant beds and is unlikely to for several weeks. Dr Jones is concerned if she admits Lucy to the local hospital, however, that the treating team may not have the skills to manage her medical risks, and provide the nutrition she needs but is reluctant to receive. Dr Jones is also not sure how to respond to the fact that Lucy is refusing treatment. Dr Jones calls the State-wide Eating Disorders Outreach Service for assistance.

The Eating Disorders Outreach Service (EDOS), a small specialist multidisciplinary team based at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital in the Metro North Hospital and Health Service receives calls every day such as that from Dr Jones. EDOS works closely with non-government organisations working in the area of eating disorders, including the Eating Disorders Association; and ISIS - The Eating Issues Centre. EDOS has a formal partnership with these two NGOs in two different forums; the Eating Disorders Advisory Group; and the Brisbane Eating Disorders Quarterly Network Meeting.

It is one of several statewide services operating from a Hospital and Health Service.

Anorexia Nervosa has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness. Many clinicians lack the knowledge, skills, experience and confidence to provide safe and effective treatment. The prevalence of eating disorders in Australia has doubled in the last ten years. Effective treatments are available, but nevertheless many people with eating disorders can suffer from a relapsing course requiring treatment and support for many years.

Consumers and carers are entitled to locally available, safe, effective care.

The specialist services available are not adequate to meet the needs of all patients with eating disorders (at any one time there may be up to 30 patients with Anorexia Nervosa in hospital beds across the state; there are five specialist inpatient beds for people affected by eating disorders in Queensland).

The National Eating Disorders Collaboration of Australia (NEDC) has recommended that tertiary consultation be available to clinicians at all levels of treatment. The recommendations state:

Access to expert consultation is required at the earliest possible point to ensure appropriate and early intervention. Wherever treatment occurs in the continuum of care, from early intervention to recovery support, service providers should have access to tertiary level expertise for education, consultation, supervision, guidance and referral if required.

The Eating Disorders Outreach Service offers an integrated spectrum of service delivery to provide the following support to clinicians, as well as consumers and carers, throughout Queensland:

Triage, Assessment and Referral

- EDOS provides triage, assessment and clinical advisory service for eating disorder problems across the state as well as an intake service including processing and assessing referrals for the appropriate level of care and specific eating disorders treatment services in Queensland. This is available to all clinicians, consumers and carers affected by eating disorders.

Consultation-Liaison (C-L) Services

- EDOS provides weekly face-to-face consultation to inpatient teams within 200km of RBWH and regular tele or videoconference consultations to more distant treating teams across Queensland.
- EDOS also offers a state-wide outpatient eating disorders assessment and treatment recommendation service based at the RBWH.
- To date a total of 162 inpatients have been referred to the EDOS C-L Service in 2013, with services provided to 25 different hospitals across Queensland.

Education and Training

- EDOS provides training throughout the state to a wide range of health and education professionals providing services to people with eating disorders and their families, including: general practitioners, dietitians, mental health clinicians, and medical, nursing and allied health clinicians in emergency departments and medical wards as well as community settings.
- Skills training is also provided to family members and carers to better equip them to support their loved one affected by an eating disorder.
- To date a total of 70 educational and training events were provided in 2013 to approximately 2250 clinicians and carers throughout the state.

Service Development and Capacity Building

- EDOS has a state-wide leadership role in supporting services wishing to enhance their capacity to provide treatment for people with eating disorders in their local area.
- In 2013 EDOS provided direct service development support to Townsville and Metro South Hospital and Health Service districts, as well as the Queensland University of Technology health services clinic, each of whom are developing local eating disorder treatment services.

Resource Development and Dissemination

- EDOS has developed a range of guidelines and other treatment resources to guide clinicians in the assessment and management of people affected by eating disorders including documents such as the Indicators for Admission, Treatment Guidelines, Discharge Checklist, and Guide to using the Mental Health Act with People Affected by Eating Disorders.

- These resources have also been shared nationally and have now been adopted by other jurisdictions across Australia including the NSW and WA Health Departments.

Direct Treatment Services

- EDOS coordinates and prioritises transfers to the five specialist eating disorder beds at the RBWH if patients have not responded to treatment at their local hospital with input from the EDOS C-L service.
- EDOS also provides a specialist outpatient evidence-based treatment clinic for adults with eating disorders residing in Metro North catchment area.

In addition all EDOS clinicians are linked in with a range of state, national and international eating disorders professional bodies and organisations in order to keep abreast of best practice and current clinical consensus in the field so this can be disseminated to clinicians for the benefit of all people with eating disorders and their families in Queensland. As with all EDOS services the aim is to form a more coordinated and committed response to the needs of people affected by eating disorders across the state. The goal is to provide improved and consistent care for those suffering from these difficult and sometimes devastating disorders; the strategy is for the standard of service provision for these pressing health problems to be raised through a combination of innovation, evaluation and generalisation of good practice.

Advice provided by

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