Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends,

2017 has been a banner year for the Eating Disorders Clinical and Research Program (EDCRP) and we are eager to share the high points with you!

We are fortunate to have received sustained funding from the National Institute of Mental Health to continue our research on the neurobiology of eating disorders in youth, and our team has had the opportunity to present exciting new data from these studies at several international meetings.

The clinical trial of our new cognitive-behavioral treatment for avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) is nearing completion, made possible by the generous support of the Hilda and Preston Davis Foundation and the American Psychological Foundation. We are grateful to the patients and families who took part in this study examining the effectiveness of this new treatment that we hope will benefit many patients and families in the future. Also, the addition of a new faculty member and several trainees has enabled us not only to grow our research program but also our clinical capacity, and we have offered consultation or treatment to more than 170 patients and families in the past year.

Our outreach efforts, including the Teen Mentor and Summer Fellowship Programs, once again enabled us to leverage the fresh perspectives and enthusiasm of the next generation of clinicians, researchers, and advocates. Thanks to all of you for joining us in our efforts to improve the lives of individuals with eating disorders.

Warmly,

Kamryn T. Eddy, PhD
Jennifer J. Thomas, PhD

Presentations

2017 ICED conference

The 2017 International Conference on Eating Disorders (ICED) was held this year in June in Prague, Czech Republic. Dr. Thomas served on the planning committee, and many members of the EDCRP presented original research to other eating disorder clinicians and researchers.

Dr. Eddy gave a plenary talk about atypical eating disorders, in which she presented data from the EDCRP team’s Adolescent Brain Study of Low-Weight Eating Disorders. The data showed that hunger and reward pathways in the brain differentiate adolescents with low weight eating disorders from healthy controls, which may offer new clues to guide assessment and treatment of these complex illnesses.

Drs. Thomas, Eddy, and Kendra Becker gave a training workshop on their novel cognitive-behavioral therapy for avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (CBT-AR). Many colleagues expressed interest in learning this new treatment, and in 2018 we plan to offer these trainings nationally, making this treatment available to as many patients and families as possible.

2017 International Psychopharmacology Course

From left to right: Dr. Jerrold Rosenbaum, Dr. Elizabeth Lawson, Dr. Kamryn Eddy, and Dr. David Rubin at the 2017 International Psychopharmacology Course in Salerno, Italy.

The MGH Psychiatry Academy hosted its first international psychopharmacology course this fall in Salerno, Italy in collaboration with the University of Salerno Medical School. Drs. Eddy and Lawson conducted training sessions about the diagnosis, neurobiology, and empirically-based treatment of eating and feeding disorders to psychiatry colleagues from around the world.

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2017 Teen Mentor Program

The Teen Mentor Program, directed by EDCRP psychiatrist Dr. Lazaro Zayas, offers adolescent girls in the community the opportunity to build their individual leadership skills by fostering positive self-image in themselves and their peers. Here are a few of the projects the Teen Mentors have completed since 2014:

• 2017 - Development of Teen Mentor Body Image website and development of a body positive assembly, featuring a talk by Beth Mayer, the Executive Director of the Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association in Newton
• 2016 - Development of a school-wide survey of body image and perceived supports available at school, followed by an assembly featuring the reflections of an adolescent in recovery from an eating disorder
• 2015 - Production of a documentary featuring the reading of “Letters to Our Former Selves,” detailing the pitfalls of solely basing one’s identity on body image
• 2014 - School-wide survey evaluating knowledge of eating disorders followed by an education day

Thank you to the Lawrence and Anne Rubenstein Foundation for their support of this invaluable program

Dear Friends and Supporters of the EDCRP:

For the past four years, I have had the honor of working with eager and inspiring teenagers as the Director of the Teen Mentor Program based at Buckingham Browne & Nichols (BB&N) in Cambridge, MA. Our goal is to dispel the myth that an ultra-slim figure, or the “thin ideal”, leads to happiness, health and greater control over one’s life. During our monthly mentoring workshops, I help guide the teens in developing and implementing body positive projects that they can then, in turn, bring to their own communities. For example, after learning that 89 percent of the student body at BB&N experienced negative thoughts about their physical appearance and felt that they could benefit from more emotional support, the 2016-2017 Teen Mentors created a website that their student body could access as a resource to learn how to help themselves and others when struggling with negative body image.

While we still have ways to go in eradicating the stigma that surrounds body image and eating disorders, the teens have reaffirmed my conviction that it is possible. My goal continues to be to grow and expand our Teen Mentor program to include a diversity of representation, including additional schools and youth programs in Greater Boston, as promoting positive body image and eating disorder awareness requires the motivation and vitality of our youth.

Warmly,
Lazaro Zayas, MD
2017 Summer Fellowship Program

Since 1997, the EDCRP has hosted 58 undergraduate and graduate students through the Matina Horner, PhD, Fellowship Program. This is an opportunity for young investigators to foster interest in eating disorders research and to receive training in the field. This year, the EDCRP hosted two summer fellows, both of whom completed independent research projects under the guidance and mentorship of Drs. Eddy, Thomas, and Franko. At the end of the summer, both of the fellows presented their research to EDCRP staff, clinical and research collaborators, and Dr. Horner.

“The outstanding leadership and work of the Eating Disorders Clinical Research Program,” said Dr. Horner “has made noteworthy advances possible in providing high quality, evidence-based care and in our understanding of the etiology, underlying risk factors, and most effective treatment and support modalities needed for this complex set of disorders.

By focusing attention and resources on much needed research, education, mentoring, etc., the EDCRP has truly made a difference: dramatically enhancing our knowledge and demystifying this once elusive set of life-threatening disorders.”

Marita Cooper, B.AppSc (Psych), Grad Dip (Psych), MPsych (Clin)

Project Title: Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder: Refining diagnostic criteria and improving nosological clarity

“My project this summer aimed to increase understanding of muscle dysmorphia, a syndrome characterized by a preoccupation with muscularity. I cannot express how grateful I am to have had the opportunity to learn and listen from the vast clinical and research knowledge within the team as well as their visiting academics and clinicians. Despite being far away from home in sunny Brisbane, Australia, I felt warmly welcomed by the team at the EDCRP and am excited to reconnect with everyone in Chicago at the International Conference on Eating Disorders next spring.”

Alice Lowy, MA

Project Title: A meta-analysis on ideal body internalization and eating pathology among black and white women

“My project focused on synthesizing the literature on the relationship between ideal body internalization and eating pathology among black and white women. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with the EDCRP and work with such a dedicated interdisciplinary team as I continue developing as a researcher and aspiring clinician.”

Presentations

(Continued from page 1)

2017 EDRS conference:

The 2017 Eating Disorders Research Society (EDRS) Conference was held this year in September in Leipzig, Germany. Many members of the EDCRP presented original research to other eating disorder clinicians and researchers. Clinical research coordinator Christopher Mancuso presented on the appetite-stimulating hormone, ghrelin, in sample of low-weight adolescents with ARFID. In what is interpreted as a biologically adaptive response to low weight, individuals with anorexia nervosa (AN) were observed to have higher levels of the hunger hormone ghrelin. While it would be expected that ghrelin would be increased in other low weight eating disorders, ghrelin levels were surprisingly not increased in the low-weight ARFID sample. These data suggest that ghrelin may play a different role in the development of ARFID.

Clinical research coordinator Alyssa Izquierdo presented implicit association task data collected from the Brain Study, the adolescent brain study of low weight eating disorders. The data show that individuals with AN have automatic positive associations with thinness and dieting, regardless of whether they endorse fear of weight gain and body image concerns. Conversely, individuals with ARFID and healthy controls did not have implicit positive associations with thinness and dieting. Since fear of weight gain and body image disturbance are key criteria for AN but not ARFID, this task may be helpful to augment assessment and diagnoses of these conditions.
Eating Disorders Clinical and Research Program

EDCRP Warm Welcomes

Cathryn Freid, PhD
Dr. Freid is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Newton, Massachusetts, specializing in evidence-based treatments, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Family-Based Treatment (FBT), for adolescents and adults with eating disorders and co-occurring conditions. Dr. Freid joined the team to provide clinical supervision to trainees in the EDCRP.

Ani Keshishian, BA
Ani joined the EDCRP in June 2017 as a clinical research coordinator. Ani graduated from Boston University (BU) with a bachelor’s degree in psychology. She has prior clinical and research experience as a Residential Counselor at the Cambridge Eating Disorder Center and as a Research Assistant at the Translational Research Program at BU.

Olivia Wons, BS
Olivia is a clinical research coordinator for the CARE Study (A study of Children and Adolescents with Avoidant/Restrictive Eating). Olivia studied Psychology and Public Health at American University in Washington, DC. Olivia has prior clinical research experience as an undergraduate research intern at the NIH and at the Donald Delaney Eating Disorders Clinic at Children’s National Medical Center.

Shirley Wang, BA
Shirley joined the EDCRP in July 2017 as a graduate student and is collaborating with us on a number of studies including an investigation of males with eating disorders. She is a first year PhD student in the Clinical Science program at Harvard University, under the mentorship of Dr. Jill Hooley, and is funded by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program.

Achievements

• Congratulations to EDCRP collaborator and mPI of both the Brain Study and the CARE Study, Dr. Elizabeth Lawson, for her promotion to Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School in 2017.

• Congratulations to EDCRP collaborator and mPI of the Brain Study, Dr. Madhusmita Misra, for being named the Fritz Bradley Talbot and Nathan Bill Talbot Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School in 2016.

EDCRP Fond Farewell

Kathryn Coniglio, BA
Kathryn, a former clinical research coordinator at the EDCRP, recently started her first year in the clinical psychology PhD program at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. Under the mentorship of Dr. Edward Selby, her research will focus on individuals with eating disorders who engage in self-harm, and the role of emotion dysregulation in maintaining eating disorder behaviors. Kathryn is excited to pursue her PhD and hopes to continue to collaborate with the EDCRP on future projects.
Dr. Kamryn Eddy: Eating disorders are not a life sentence. In our Longitudinal Study of Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa, we found that most people recovered over time. Even for women who had been ill for more than a decade, long-term improvement and recovery continued to occur by 22-year follow-up. My role as a therapist is to hold hope for my patients even when they may be feeling hopeless. I had the privilege of working with Jessica and witnessing her progression from chronically ill to fully recovered. She shares her powerful story below.

“Can you share a little bit about what brought you in for treatment?”
I began treatment after my doctor recommended I get help. At the time, I would not leave my apartment. I was terrified of buying food, and would only go out late at night. My body felt foreign to me, like I was an alien with a shape only I could envision.

“What parts of your treatment were most helpful to you?”
I found CBT and gradual exposure to the things that made me uncomfortable to be helpful. I liked being able to see myself slowly conquer increasingly difficult challenges. Dr. Eddy is an amazingly supportive therapist, and knowing that she always believed in me was immensely helpful. It took a long time, but I was eventually able to tolerate things that terrified me when I first went into treatment (like wearing short sleeves, or eating cheese).

“How/what are you doing these days?”
I’m doing well these days. I teach full time, and I have run two marathons. I can go to a restaurant without worrying about calories. I feel comfortable in my own skin. For the first time, my life feels full.

“What tools do you use to keep yourself healthy/in recovery now?”
To keep myself healthy, I make sure to eat three meals a day. Working at a school helps me to do this. I also do at least one big grocery shop once a week. I think recovery is as much mental as it is physical, so I prioritize having a healthy work life balance, and I don’t bite off more than I can chew. I challenge myself, but I am also aware of my limits. When I begin to get stressed, I seek out something to counter it, like a yoga class. Once I truly believed that I was worthy of recovery (and everyone is worthy of recovery), health and happiness began to follow. Once your plate has no restrictions, your life opens up, and you slowly begin to do things you never imagined were possible.

“Everything you want is on the other side of fear.”

What would you say to someone with an eating disorder who is unsure about whether or not to seek treatment?
I would tell anyone who is ambivalent about seeking treatment that there is hope. It is absolutely possible to recover, and even thrive. It’s scary, and it won’t be easy, but the more help you allow yourself to get, the more your life will grow. And the freedom to live life without constant restrictions and fears about food is worth fighting for. Everything you want is on the other side of fear.
In the News

- Dr. Kamryn Eddy was quoted in an article in Self magazine entitled “Orthorexia: How My ‘Clean Eating’ Turned Into Anorexia”: “Too much or too little of any one thing is generally problematic, and strict food rules in any form can set the stage for eating disorders,” said Eddy.

The EDCRP team’s research on ARFID was featured on WCVB news on the night of the Oscars. Study nurse practitioner, Elisa Asanza, and clinical research coordinator, Reitumetse Pulumo, demonstrate the use of sniffin’ sticks as part of the CARE study with Dr. Kendra Becker. Following this news clip, the EDCRP received more than a hundred calls from patients and their families who were interested in learning more about our ARFID research studies.

- Here’s a sneak preview of a worksheet from Drs. Thomas’ and Eddy’s forthcoming book, entitled *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Avoidant/Restrictive: Children, Adolescents, and Adults* to be published by Cambridge University Press.

Update from Our Post-Doctoral Fellow

**Dr. Kendra Becker** completed the first year of her postdoctoral fellowship at the EDCRP coinciding with the first year of her NIMH-funded fellowship grant on reward processing in individuals AN or low weight ARFID. She has been investigating hormonal and neural features that may both differentiate these disorders and inform treatment strategies, and has made great strides this year:

- Dr. Becker was awarded a Department of Psychiatry honor at the 2017 MGH Clinical Research Day for her preliminary work.

- As an extension of this larger grant, Dr. Becker was awarded a 2017 HMS Department of Psychiatry Livingston Fellowship Award to examine long term cortisol as a biomarker for severity of low weight eating disorders.

- Dr. Becker is also serving as study therapist for the EDCRP treatment trial for the newly developed cognitive behavioral therapy for ARFID, and co-presented patient successes at the ICED in Prague, Czech Republic.

- Also at the 2017 ICED, Dr. Becker was awarded an Academy for Eating Disorders Student/Early Career Travel Fellowship for two oral presentations: one on weight gain in AN and another on understanding non-compensatory purging.

- Dr. Becker was awarded a Global Foundation for Eating Disorders/Eating Disorders Research Society Award for Postdoctoral Young Scientists for findings on low weight parameters and severity classification schemes in relation to bone mineral density in adolescent AN.

For these efforts, along with continuing to see EDCRP patients, leading the dialectical behavioral therapy group, four newly published articles, and over ten guest presentations on eating disorders and their treatments for students, staff, and patients, Dr. Becker was recently awarded a NIH loan-repayment grant to further fund her career at the EDCRP.

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**Learning About New Foods: The Five Steps**

Ask yourself these five questions when approaching a new food!

- **#1** What does it look like (e.g., green, round)?)
- **#2** What does it feel like (e.g., smooth, rough)?
- **#3** What does it smell like (e.g., strong, bitter)?
- **#4** What does it taste like (e.g., sweet, salty)?
- **#5** What is the texture like (e.g., chewy, soft)?

**Congratulations!**

Remember, the more you practice, the more you learn. Even if you do not like a new food at first, that’s ok. Research shows it can take 10 or more times to get comfortable with a new food. Plus, trying the same food multiple times will enhance your learning.

**CARE Study**

Clinical investigators from Psychiatry, Pediatrics, and Endocrinology are teaming up to study avoidant/restrictive eating patterns (or difficulty eating) in young people. Drs. Jennifer Thomas, Elizabeth Lawson, and Nadia Micali (of the University of Geneva in Switzerland) received NIMH funding to conduct a longitudinal study examining the ways in which avoidant and restrictive eating patterns can affect hormones and brain regions involved in emotion and fear processing, appetite regulation, and sensory perception.

This study involves an initial screening visit, a main study visit, and two shorter follow-up study visits over the course of 2 years. The study uses brain imaging (MRI) to examine these types of feeding and eating disorders, as well as predict symptoms associated with recovery speed. This is an observational study and involves no treatment interventions.

We are currently recruiting participants ages 10 – 22 years old (both those with avoidant/restrictive eating and healthy volunteers). Study visits include history and physical examination, blood draws, MRI scans, interviews and questionnaires, a meal and snack, and cognitive tasks. Participants will be compensated up to $150 for this study. If interested, please contact Elisa Asanza at CAREstudy@partners.org or 617-726-9394.

**Brain Study**

Clinical investigators from Pediatrics, Endocrinology, and Psychiatry are teaming up to study appetite regulation pathways thought to be mechanistic in eating disorder symptoms of restrictive eating, bingeing, and purging. Drs. Madhu Misra, Elizabeth Lawson, and Kamryn Eddy received NIMH funding to conduct a longitudinal study of eating behaviors and illness course in adolescents.

This study involves an initial screening visit and three follow-up visits over the course of 18 months. It uses brain imaging (MRI) to look at hunger and reward in 10- to 22-year-olds with low weight eating disorders in relation to illness course, that is, patterns of symptom change and recovery. This is an observational study and involves no treatment.

We are recruiting 10-22 year olds with any type of low weight eating disorder. Study visits include a history and physical, blood draws, MRI, interviews, a standard meal and snack, questionnaires, and cognitive measures. Participants will be compensated up to $550 for this study. Please email anebrainstudy@partners.org or call study nurse practitioner Meghan Slattery at 617-643-0267 for more information.

**Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Rumination Disorder**

The EDCRP has developed a treatment for rumination disorder (RD), a disorder which involves food coming back up into the mouth repeatedly after eating and subsequent re-chewing, re-swallowing, or spitting out. Dr. Thomas and a former EDCRP research coordinator, Helen Burton Murray, developed the first official, manualized treatment for RD called cognitive behavioral therapy for RD (CBT-RD).

Dr. Thomas and Ms. Murray developed CBT-RD because they were receiving increasing requests from patients and their referring providers for treatment of RD. Treatment options across the country for individuals with RD are extremely limited and many patients with RD go untreated. In fact, Dr. Thomas and Ms. Murray published a case report in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, on the successful treatment of a patient with RD who had gone 15 years without accurate diagnosis and treatment.

Dr. Thomas and Ms. Murray are currently testing CBT-RD in a pilot study of individuals who are seeking treatment for RD at the EDCRP and at Drexel University in Philadelphia. They are hopeful that both the availability of this new treatment and the findings from the pilot study will allow individuals with RD to get the treatment they need. Participants will be compensated up to $75 for this study. If you or someone you know may be interested in participating, please e-mail us at akeshishian@mgh.harvard.edu OR call 617-726-8470. Participants must be ages 10 or older and the treatment will involve 5 to 7 treatment sessions over the course of three months.

By participating in one of our research studies, you will help researchers gain a better understanding of eating disorders and how to best treat them. The knowledge gained from these research studies not only improves patient care, but also contributes to moving science forward.
Eating Disorders Clinical and Research Program Team

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WAYS TO GIVE
For information about ways to support the clinical care, research, teaching and advocacy activities of the MGH Eating Disorders Clinical and Research Program, please contact Molly McCarthy at (617) 643-8827 or mmccarthy50@partners.org