

Preliminary Efficacy of a Pilot Paediatric Day Hospital Program Project to Address Severe Mental Illness, Obesity, and Binge Eating

Authors : Alene Toulany, Elizabeth Dettmer, Seena Grewal, Kaley Roosen, Andrea Regina, Cathleen Steinegger, Kate Stadelman, Melissa Chambers, Lindsay Lochhead, Kelsey Gallagher, Alissa Steinberg, Andrea Leyser, Allison Lougheed, Jill Hamilton

Abstract : Obesity and psychiatric disorders occur together so frequently that the combination has been coined an epidemic within an epidemic. Youth living with obesity are at increased risk for trauma, depression, anxiety and disordered eating. Although symptoms of binge eating disorder are common in paediatric obesity management programs, they are often not identified or addressed within treatment. At The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), a tertiary care paediatric hospital in Toronto, Canada, adolescents with obesity are treated in an interdisciplinary outpatient clinic (1-2 hours/week). This intensity of care is simply not enough to help these extremely complex patients. Existing day treatment programs for eating, and psychiatric disorders are not well suited for patients with obesity. In order to address this identified care gap, a unique collaboration was formed between the obesity, psychiatry, and eating disorder programs at SickKids in 2015. The aim of this collaboration was to provide an enhanced treatment arm to our general psychiatry day hospital program that addresses both the mental health issues and the lifestyle challenges common to youth with obesity and binge eating. The program is currently in year-one of a two-year pilot project and is designed for a length of stay of approximately 6 months. All youth participate in daily group therapy, academics, and structured mealtimes. The groups are primarily skills-based and are informed by cognitive/dialectical behavioural therapies. Weekly family therapy and individual therapy, as well as weekly medical appointments with a psychiatrist and a nurse, are provided. Youth in the enhanced treatment arm also receive regular sessions with a dietitian to establish normalized eating behaviours and monthly multifamily meal sessions to address challenges related to behaviour change and mealtimes in the home. Outcomes that will be evaluated include measures of mental health, anthropometrics, metabolic status, and healthcare satisfaction. At the end of the two years, it is expected that we will have had about 16 youth participants. This model of care delivery will be the first of its kind in Canada and is expected to inform future paediatric treatment practices.

Keywords : adolescent, binge eating, mental illness, obesity

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