



Enriching Lives

A.C.T. NEWSLETTER

February 2, 2009

February 22 – 28 is National Eating Disorders Awareness Week - During February 22 – 28 in 2009, communities across the nation will observe National Eating Disorders (NED) Awareness Week. February 22 – 28 is a moment in time to focus our awareness on eating disorders that affects 10 million females and 1 million males.¹ The theme for 2009 is, "... until eating disorders are history." The goal of NED Awareness week is to prevent eating disorders and body image issues and to enhance access to treatment.

Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Current research studies report that 5 – 10% of individuals with anorexia die within 10 years after contracting the disease; 18 - 20% of individuals with anorexia will die after 20 years and only 30 – 40% of individuals fully recover. Sadly, 20% of people suffering from anorexia will prematurely die from complications related to their eating disorder, including suicide and heart problems. Even more disturbing, the mortality rate associated with anorexia nervosa is 12 times higher than the death rate of ALL causes of death for females 15 – 24 years old.²

Types of Eating Disorders. There are two main types of eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, and bulimia nervosa. Anorexia Nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by an intense fear of weight gain and an excessive desire for weight loss. Bulimia Nervosa is also a severe eating disorder, distinguished by a cycle of binge eating and compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting designed to prevent weight gain. Moreover, eating disorders are associated with numerous health consequences.

In anorexia nervosa's cycle of self-starvation, the body is deprived of the essential nutrients to function normally. Thus, the body is forced to slow down all of its processes to conserve energy, resulting in serious medical consequences. Such consequences may include increased risk for heart failure, reduction of bone density, muscle loss and weakness, kidney failure, and hair loss.³

The recurrent binge-and-purge cycles of bulimia can affect the entire digestive system, the heart and other major organ functions. Health consequences for bulimia include irregular heartbeats, heart failure and death. Gastric and esophageal rupture may result from the binge-and-purge pattern. Additional health conditions consist of tooth decay, tooth staining, peptic ulcers and pancreatitis.

Eating Disorder Support. A.C.T. is committed to raising awareness of the dangers surrounding eating disorders and the need for early intervention and treatment. A.C.T. facilitates an eating disorder support group, and will provide information on attaining a positive body image to promote public education about eating disorders during the annual observance. For more information, please contact Dr. Drecun at Dr.Drecun@a4ct.com or (858) 792-3541.

1. Crowther et al., 1992; Fairburn et al., 1993; Gordon, 1990; Hoek, 1995; Shisslak et al., 1995

2 South Carolina Department of Mental Health

3 NationalEatingDisorders.org