

13 September 2021

Dr Angelique Ralph
National Eating Disorders Collaboration
103 Alexander Street
Crows Nest NSW 2065

Via email: angelique.ralph@nedc.com.au

Dear Dr Ralph,

Re: Invitation to review Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Eating Disorders for People in Larger Bodies

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Eating Disorders for People in Larger Bodies.

We provide the following comments for consideration.

Role of the GP

The RACGP acknowledges the significant expertise of the members on the guideline development group. However, we express concern on the lack of general practitioner (GP) representation. GPs are usually the first point of contact for patients and provide care for both their physical and mental health needs.

GPs take a holistic approach and are well placed to address preventive measures that can improve a patient's physical and mental health. GPs play a central role in the patient's care team, are able to navigate the system and can help direct their patient to the most appropriate services, such as psychologists, state health services or community support services.

Shared care arrangements should be established between GPs and specialist mental health providers for patients with mental health issues to reduce fragmentation of care and ensure responsibilities for physical health checks and treatments are clearly defined.

People living with obesity have a high risk of physical health issues and this should be prioritised for their wellbeing. GPs are in a position to establish whether they have an eating disorder before referral to the appropriate psychological service.

The RACGP cautions on early referral to providers that currently already have long waiting times and are not easily accessible, especially in rural and remote areas. There is a significant risk that patients unable to secure appointments will not have access to the required treatment. General practice is the most accessible service for those who require mental and physical health care and, in rural areas, often the only service available.

Use of the term 'person living in a larger body'

It is important for the body and the mind to be considered as a whole and not separately. Use of the term 'person living in a larger body' promotes a disconnect between person and body and suggests there should only be a focus on the mental health of people living with obesity, rather than focussing

on both physical and mental health. We are not aware of convincing evidence to suggest that only a psychological treatment for obesity improves the patient's health and reduces their morbidity.

Comments on recommendations

- The RACGP supports recommendations that focus on the issue of weight stigma.
- The RACGP also supports the recommendation that harms from eating disorders are considered alongside weight loss interventions. A key recommendation in this section is to defer weight loss interventions until the person's eating disorder has been addressed. We recommend the high risk of harm from co-morbidities associated with obesity be made clear in the summary tables.
- While the indication of the level of evidence is provided using A-D, no 'strength' of the recommendation has been made. There is a risk that recommendations with poorer evidence will be ignored. As an example, using the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach to determine 'strength' would be useful.
- The summary of key recommendations (Table 1.2) should provide more detail on pharmacotherapy options. It would be helpful to have the strength of evidence added in Table 2.3.
- Minimising the use of abbreviations would allow Table 1.2 to be interpreted independently of the rest of the document.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. For any enquiries regarding this letter, please contact Stephan Groombridge, eHealth and Quality Care Manager on 03 8699 0544 or stephan.groombridge@racgp.org.au.

Yours sincerely



Dr Karen Price
President