Treatment models to support safety-related concerns within higher levels of care for pediatric eating disorders: a narrative review

Bain, T.*, Hammond, D.*, Coelho, J. S.
Provincial Specialized Eating Disorder Program, BC Children’s Hospital; Department of Psychiatry, University of British Columbia

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The treatment of youth with eating disorders in higher levels of care, whereby they receive specialized care in an inpatient or day program hospital setting, can be particularly complex when they present with concurrent non-suicidal self-harm or aggressive behaviours. This highlights the need for trauma-informed care and strategies to maintain patient safety.

In the context of the redevelopment of the inpatient service model for a provincial pediatric eating disorders program, our team set out to review the literature on interventions for youth presenting safety-related behaviors (i.e., aggression or self-harm) within higher levels of eating disorder care.

METHODS

We employed a search term strategy relating to five key concepts: (1) eating disorders, (2) self-harm, (3) aggressive behaviours, (4) higher levels of care, (5) pediatric samples. We then retrieved relevant articles within the following electronic databases:

- PsycInfo
- CINAHL
- MEDLINE
- PubMed

Figure 1: Review Process

This review highlights the importance of flexible, multifaceted, and individualized treatment practices in higher levels of care for patients who present with eating disorders and concurrent non-suicidal self-harm or aggressive behaviours.

The Canadian Practice Guidelines 16 highlight the need to develop treatments for severe eating disorders with complex co-morbidity. Overall, the literature suggests prioritizing affect stabilization, self-compassion, and collaborative care during admissions to higher levels of care in the context of safety-related concerns.