

Monday, 13 November 2006

AUSSIE EATING DISORDER PATIENTS DO TWICE AS WELL AS SWEDES

A Swedish treatment for patients with anorexia and bulimia, which opened a Melbourne clinic earlier this year, today reported a success rate for Australians almost double that of Swedish patients.

Twenty-nine Australian young women have undertaken the non-drug based treatment in Sweden, the US and in Melbourne since August 2003 with their median remission time 7.9 months compared to 14.5 months for Swedish patients. The evidence-based and clinically-tested treatment claims a 75 percent success rate with a relapse rate of less than 10 percent.

Swedish scientist and treatment founder, Dr Cecilia Bergh, said that the results for Australians were extraordinary.

“The reasons the Australians do so well is because the environmental cues which maintain the illness are removed for Australians moving to the US or Sweden for treatment,” Dr Bergh said.

“However, the results are even more extraordinary considering that the average number of previous eating disorder treatments for the Australians was three, and some had had up to 20 treatments. They had been ill for an average of seven years.”

Dr Bergh said that it was vital for the clinic in Australia, based in North Brighton, Victoria, and currently helping patients from NSW, Queensland and South Australia to continue because it reduced the cost for parents in sending their children overseas for the treatment.

However, the Federal Government does not reimburse parents for treatment costs.

Dr Bergh said patients’ parents were forming a lobby group tomorrow to pressure Canberra for public funding.

“A parents pressure group wants to get the treatment costs reimbursed. This would save the community millions in treatment costs. According to The Lancet, our treatment saves the community \$AU700,000 for every patient treated to recovery,” Dr Bergh said.

The Australian clinic provides out-patient services to young women who have been treated in the clinics overseas. However, Dr Bergh said that due to the demand and good results it is expanding its services to taking patients from all parts of Australia and treating them here.

It has been available in Sweden for 13 years.

The treatment, which has been available in Sweden for 13 years where it is Government subsidised, involves normalising eating behaviour and the perception of fullness by using a device called a Mandometer that teaches patients how to eat and perceive fullness. The treatment also involves warming the patients who have a very low body temperature using special thermal jackets, putting the patient in a warm room which reduces their anxiety, decreasing physical activity as they are hyperactive, building self esteem and repairing social life.