

NPATS

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Northern Psychological Assessment and Treatment Service
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Reflections by Lewi Yiolitis

It has been just over two years since the COVID-19 pandemic reached Australia and we entered into our first of many lockdowns in Victoria. As a society we have endured countless forced changes including the way we live, work and spend time with our friends and family. Most of us acknowledge that the lockdowns, mandates and restrictions were necessary to ensure that we could avoid contracting COVID-19 prior to a vaccination becoming available. Thankfully, the vaccines have come, and they have for most provided genuine protection from serious illness.

I'd like to acknowledge the sad reality that too many in our society have succumbed (and continue to succumb) to the virus of whom a large proportion were in aged care in our local area. We share in these losses together as a community and stand in support of those who have directly lost loved ones. The COVID-19 losses are not limited to the loss of life. The reality for many has not been the loss of a loved one, but regrettably a raft of other losses. For many, relationships became too strained over the last few years and have eventually broken down. Others have suffered loss of employment, financial security and plans for their future have changed forever. The gravity of such losses is enormous for many in our community and will take time to come to terms with.

Many of us have had to re-evaluate what we consider to be the most important things in our lives. With such reflection, however, has come an opportunity for greater understanding of ourselves and where we had been headed in life. This has not been a bad outcome for some. I personally feel we have been able to view our lives and relationships with greater clarity which can be a positive thing.



Lewi Yiolitis
Principal Clinical Psychologist NPATS
 B. Sc. (Hons),
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Hot Topic - Eating Disorders

by Josie Catania, Clinical Psychologist and Eating Disorder specialist/trainer

Eating disorders are serious and complex mental illnesses, characterised by a disturbance in behaviours, thoughts and attitudes to food, eating, body weight and shape. These disorders significantly impact a person's life and can result in medical, psychiatric and psychosocial consequences. In fact, eating disorder sufferers are 6 times more likely to experience premature mortality compared to the average population.

With a prevalence rate of 4%, there are about one million Australians who have a diagnosis of an eating disorder and only about 23% of these access appropriate treatment. Out of this 4%, 3% have Anorexia Nervosa, 12% Bulimia Nervosa, 47% Binge Eating Disorder and 38% have other eating disorders. Individuals with eating disorders will often experience co-morbid mental health (anxiety disorders, mood disorders, PTSD, substance use, personality disorders) and medical health conditions (diabetes, polycystic ovarian syndrome, weak or fragile bones, low blood pressure, digestive issues, joint pains, headaches/migraines, menstrual problems, sleep problems) (NEDC).

The COVID pandemic has seen a considerable rise in the number of individuals presenting with eating disorders, as well as those at risk of developing an eating disorder. As reported in the media, there have been enormous challenges faced by children, adolescents and adults seeking treatment, with private practitioners either closing their books or lengthy wait periods becoming a barrier to treatment. This has placed pressure on emergency services and inpatient treatment services who were often already at capacity. Whilst at NPATS we have not closed our books during the pandemic, we have screened our referrals to ensure appropriateness to be on our waitlist.

Having experience in both the public and private settings, I understand the importance of early identification, assessment and treatment of eating disorders. Individuals with an eating disorder can access up to 40 sessions of evidence-based treatment (CBTE, SSCM, CBT-GSH) under an Eating Disorder Care Plan. At NPATS I accept referrals for patients experiencing an eating disorder aged 17 years and above and provide evidence-based treatments including: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Enhanced (CBTE), Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for ARFID (CBTAR), Cognitive Behaviour Therapy – Guided Self Help (CBT-GSH) and Specialist Supportive Clinical Management.

Individuals being referred for an eating disorder treatment are always screened via phone and the involvement of a GP for regular medical and physical monitoring is required. Support for the GP, family/ carers as well as the individual is offered through our practice. We aim to ensure the individual with an eating disorder is well supported at home whilst respecting confidentiality. Please feel free to contact me at NPATS to discuss a referral and/or the process involved.

Suggested Resource:

- The Inside Out Institute offers great resources to private practitioners, such as templates of eating disorder care plans, GP care plan review, and eating disorder examination questionnaire (EDE-Q).



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Our practice

Like almost all psychology practices in Melbourne, we have been restricted to offering largely Telehealth sessions for most of the last two years. The vast majority of our patients have adjusted to this new means of psychological treatment, however, there has been a small portion of patients who have elected not to take up this option. We continue to be guided by the Department of Health and abide by their requirements and recommendations. We have been able to allow some more acutely unwell patients to attend our clinic and hope in coming weeks to months to give more of our patients the option of face-to-face sessions. This is likely to occur when the current COVID-10 Omicron subvariant reaches a plateau and an anticipated drop in cases (hopefully) follows. We hope that our patients continue to respect the challenging position the clinic finds itself with regards to balancing health concerns of our patients and staff, government guidelines, and people's desire to return to face-to-face consultations.

Referrals - NPATS is currently accepting referrals for both Lewi Yiolitis and Josie Catania, although there is a wait. We are pleased to inform that Josie Catania will take on an extra day at the clinic over the coming few months which will reduce her waiting time.

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