

Scottish Eating Disorder Interest Group Newsletter

January 2003

Attached to this issue of the newsletter is a Conference application form for the next meeting (Thursday 6th March) entitled "What Words Can't Say; Self Expression through the Arts", based on Eating Disorders and Creative Therapies. The Cullen Centre's Art Therapist, Judy Wilkinson, has kindly agreed to organise the day which will begin, as usual, with coffee and registration 10-10:30a.m. Subject to change, introductory workshops and presentations on Art and Drama Therapy shall occupy the morning slot (Music and Dance to be confirmed), with the specifics of Art Therapy as a treatment for eating disorders being presented in the afternoon. 4pm close.

Please note that those who are due membership fees will receive a reminder with their newsletter.

Many thanks,

Heather Morrison
Secretary.

Committee News

Chair, Maggie Gray, has announced her intention to resign at the end of 2003 and would like members to consider a new candidate in March.

SEDIG wishes to thank Rosemary Stewart for all her work over the years as Treasurer, and welcomes Judy Long, a carer member who, whilst attending the October conference, volunteered, and was elected to take over from Rosemary.

New EDA representative, Mark Reilly, Head of Regional Support, has also joined the ranks in place of Ruth Taylor.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week 2nd to 8th Feb 2003. Awareness Week is an ideal opportunity for all of us, across the

country, to work together to increase knowledge, awareness and understanding of eating disorders and surrounding issues, and to campaign for improved treatment and care.

Activities during Awareness Week last year helped to bring more attention nationwide to the subject through newspaper TV and Radio interviews,; specialist units opening their doors to the public, talks being given by leading experts in the field, and through groups holding social events, collections and the recruitment of volunteers.

We need to ensure that the next Eating Disorders Awareness week has an even greater impact. The theme of the week will be "The Hidden Costs of Eating Disorders", due for launch on Monday 3rd Feb (10.30am) via a press conference hosted at the EDA's London offices. Here, the EDA shall present a report revealing the true impact of eating disorders upon 1.1 million sufferers, their education, physical and mental health, as well as the impact on parents, partners, carers and social services. The document will reveal the extent of related problems including: debt, family break up, shoplifting, self harming, loss of employment, drug and alcohol abuse, and promiscuity. The report will be published and, made available online at www.edauk.com on Feb 3rd.

Thank you for your help and support.

Susan Ringwood (Chief Executive Officer) and Steve Bloomfield (Media and Information Manager).

Awareness Raising Activities

Coinciding with awareness week, NHS Grampian have sent out invitations for their Eating Disorders Service Awareness Day at The Post Graduate Centre, Foresterhill Road, Aberdeen, on Friday

7th Feb, organised by SEDIG member Jane Knox and colleagues.

Carolyn Fraser (Short Course Development and Conference Manager - from the Department of Nutrition at Glasgow University) has informed SEDIG of the Department's plans to hold a conference on eating disorders some time this year.

Please refer to the enclosed poster for details of the Cullen and Rivers Centres Open Day on Thursday 6th February.

Sponsored Cycle

As some of you already know, I am embarking upon a second sponsored Cycle Challenge to raise funds for research into Eating Disorders.

In 2000 a group of us took part in a cycling venture to Vietnam raising over £180,000 which has been used to establish a Trust currently funding two new Researchers who work within the Eating Disorders Unit at The Institute of Psychiatry, under the guidance of Professor Janet Treasure.

The Trust has been created in the name of Nina Jackson, the person who instigated and organized the entire venture. She has rallied some of the troops again, as she quite rightly feels we cannot leave it there. We all hope that we can build on our previous success and be able to fund this research in perpetuity.

Although I vowed I would never do anything like it again, she must have caught me in a moment of weakness. This time it is 650Kms through the foothills of the Andes in Chile, and somehow, despite the thought of those "undulations", it is proving very difficult to get back in the saddle and raise funds for a second time round.

I hate asking for sponsorship as I feel it conjures up the misconception that people are being asked to fund someone's holiday. Speaking from our Vietnam

experience, I can assure you that, in this organization, it is certainly not a holiday – an amazing, unforgettable experience perhaps, but it is definitely not a joy ride nor is it travel on the cheap. I have managed to raise the required £3000 to secure my place by doing car boot sales, a concert, selling cards, you name it, but my commitment to the cause is such that I will carry on for as long as energy allows – hopefully leaving some energy for pedalling. It is certainly a good way to raise awareness of these illnesses which I regard as a very important factor, and as members of SEDIG we must all realise how vital the research is. If anyone has any energy to run a fund raising event, or indeed, has any new ideas to pass on to me, or even a straight donation, I would be so very grateful.

Spare a thought for my ageing and aching bones during the March SEDIG meeting – I will be in the midst!

Chrissie Wright.

NEEDS/SEDIG Petition Update

Regarding the NEED's/SEDIG petition - for better resources and services in Scotland for the treatment of eating disorders. Gràinne is currently appealing for many more signatures to add to the list, and would like petitions to be sent out to GP surgeries, social work departments, schools etc...etc... Any fresh ideas and/or new contacts to help turn these plans into reality would be gratefully received. Gràinne may be contacted at the address below:

Ms G. Smith,
Am Fasgadh
47 Buchan Street
Macduff
Banffshire
Scotland AB44 1TB

Website

Fred Grieve has thanked SEDIG for the whiskey he received in gratitude for designing and updating the website - which now has links to and from the

EDA site courtesy of both Fred and Mark Reilly. Our website address is:

<http://sedig.members.beeb.net>

In order to improve user access to the site, members decided (during the October business meeting) that a search engine should be purchased. This is now up and running.

My First SEDIG Meeting. Nine and a half hours on the train and coach (ten and a half hours on the return journey), no seat reservations, women and children first, floods, landslides and hotel alarm bells at 5.30 in the morning. I very much hoped that the SEDIG meeting the following day would be worth attending and thankfully I was not disappointed.

Firstly, on a purely selfish note, it was great to meet Gràinne and Chrissy who, even in my short spell with the EDA, have worked tirelessly to support people affected by eating disorders and have helped promote the work of the Eating Disorders Association.

I was really impressed with the conference room and the view across Perth is beautiful – particularly as the sun had finally appeared. It was also nice to be introduced to everyone by the chair – it took me a few seconds to realise that it was me who was being introduced! The turnout was also impressive – is the group always this well attended?

The first guest speaker followed the introductions. Unfortunately I didn't take note of her name, a lady who worked with drug and alcohol addictions. She invited us to look at the addictive nature of eating disorders and draw our own conclusions as to whether or not an eating disorder could be described as an addiction. We were also encouraged to look at the pros and cons of labelling it as such. The workshops were relaxed and everyone in our group contributed and took part in discussion.

After lunch, and another great opportunity to talk to and learn from, members of the group, we reconvened with our second speaker, Dr Chris Freeman, who spoke about eating disorders and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

I must say, I thought this was a really interesting presentation and it gave me a greater understanding of OCD and some of the issues around anorexia. We role played in groups and were encouraged to draw parallels between the six domains of OCD and someone who had an eating disorder. I remember that perfectionism in particular was one of the domains which featured strongly. It seemed that there were numerous links between the two.

I found the day really useful, I learnt a lot from various people and came away feeling that the work we are all involved in is really important and valued by those that we help.

Its also reassuring that people who work with eating disorders maintain a sense of humour and seem to be focused on the positive aspects of what they can do to help people.

I think one of the great strengths of the group, which helps to make it a success, is the broad range of people who attend. There appears to be a wealth of experience within the group – from carer to clinician and it is encouraging to see people who are affected by eating disorders personally or professionally, sharing views, ideas and information.

My First SEDIG Meeting (24.10.02)

Having just assumed responsibility for providing four sessions of clinical psychology input to eating disorders sufferers in the Perth and Kinross area, I was eager to attend my first SEDIG meeting and make contact with those already active in the field. As the date of the meeting approached however, newly sporting a spectacular black eye acquired

in the line of duty(!), I began to feel quite daunted at the prospect of entering a room of “old hands” with a wealth of experience and knowledge between them. I need not have worried.

Immediately on arrival at the Ballroom of Murray Royal Hospital, I was struck by the friendly atmosphere inside and by the obvious relief that, after the lamentable closure of Alex Yellowlees’ eating disorders service at the beginning of the year, there was again going to be some form of local provision.

The meeting itself comprised two presentations – separated by a brief (always best) discussion of business matters and lunch – both of which examined possible relationships between eating disorders and other diagnoses. The shared theme of the presentations added an air of continuity to the day, while the differing backgrounds of the invited speakers provided an interesting contrast.

In the morning Pauline Fox drew attention to the common elements in the existing classifications of eating disorders and addictions and prompted discussion as to whether the former could, in fact, be reclassified as examples of the latter. Two models from the addictions literature were presented, namely those of Orford, and Pochaska and DiClemente, and were applied to illustrate the processes of eating disorders development and maintenance, and recovery respectively. Particular emphasis was placed on the “Pre-contemplative Stage” of the Prochaska and DiClemente model as a potential barrier to treatment and strategies aimed at facilitating the process of change were suggested.

Separation into smaller groups enabled in-depth discussion of the ways in which an eating disorder might affect the physical, psychological/emotional, social and environmental areas of someone’s life and vice versa and, perhaps less easy to reach agreement on, of the pros and cons of classifying eating disorders as addictions. While there seemed to be a

general consensus that pros would include possible increases in funding and publicity for eating disorders and cons would include the potentials for losing sight of fundamental differences in psychopathology and treatment, and for stigma, a variety of equally valid opinions were expressed thanks to Pauline and a particularly thought provoking session.

The afternoon belonged to Chris Freeman and to consideration of the overlap between eating disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Having been lectured to by Chris during my training at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, and having listened to him speak at the Cullen Centre National Eating Disorders Conference earlier this year, I was looking forward to once again being privy to his extensive knowledge of the field and its links with others. As usual Chris did not disappoint and figure such as: between 2 and 48% of patients with an eating disorder have obsessive compulsive disorder symptoms and between 8 and 12% of patients with obsessive compulsive disorder have eating disorder symptoms, raised my awareness of potentially important areas of inquiry when assessing sufferers of both.

A detailed examination of the similarities and differences between eating disorders and obsessive compulsive disorder pre-empted a workshop where by participants were asked to experiment with applying the “six domains” of obsessive compulsive disorder to an interview with an anorexic patient. In my own group a fact-based (and sterling!) performance by Alex Yellowlees served to reinforce the points that had been made in the preceding presentation – e.g. that symptoms of obsessive compulsive disorder, particularly a preoccupation with symmetry, are a common and often enduring consequence of starvation – and to highlight several treatment implications.

They say you never forget your first time, and my first experience of SEDIG and its biannual meetings will be memorable for all the right reasons. I was impressed by the number and range of members present, by the complimentary nature and quality of the presentations given and by the skills of Maggie Gray and Heather Marrison in ensuring that the whole event ran smoothly and according to time. Above all however, as someone new to the specialist area of eating disorders and its own, unique, concerns, I was heartened to meet such a pro-active group of individuals dedicated to improving the lives of sufferers and their carers (and to not be asked too many questions about the black eye!).

Dr Paula Graham, Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Tayside Primary Care NHS Trust.