



## Alternative eating disorder treatment claims strong results

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The developer of an alternative eating disorder treatment, promoted as a breakthrough in fighting the problem, claims her research shows teaching patients how to eat normally again offers new hope.

Dr Cecilia Bergh, developed the Mandometer Treatment at Sweden's Karolinska University in 1992, with Professor Per. Sodersten. Dr Berg now offers the treatment in Sweden and the US and in Melbourne.

She said the Treatment, "reeducates" patients to recognise the "feeling of fullness by eating their meals using an interactive computer scale". She said the use of pharmacological treatment/antidepressant drugs is reduced and eventually eliminated during treatment.

Dr Bergh said after treating 1,428 patients with a range of eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia, her research showed a 75 per cent remission rate after an average of twelve and a half months of treatment. The rate of relapse over five years of follow-up was just 10 per cent.

She said in comparison, research showed less than 50 per cent of sufferers undergoing standard treatment programs reached remission and when they did, they remained symptomatic. The majority were reported to relapse within a year, resulting in just 10 per cent of these patients recovering over a period of 10-12 years.

She said her research turned traditional treatment programs on their heads.

"Traditional treatment often focuses upon psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and obsessive behaviour as the cause of the eating disorder, hence high remission rates through treatment with drugs.



Dr Cecilia Bergh said her alternative eating disorder treatment the Mandometer Method, casts doubt on traditional psychological approaches that combine psychoactive drugs.

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"Our research found that calorie restriction through dieting causes eating disorders due to a hormonal response that initiates a feeling of reward. This in turn prompts further dieting that can lead to anorexia nervosa and binge eating.

"The research shows that psychological problems are the consequence of the eating disorder and so treatment programs need to address this," she said.

Bergh said the treatment methodology used in the study included:

1. ❖ Heat therapy - keeping patients warm through external heat to avoid calorie loss
2. ❖ Exercise reduction - to maintain nutritional benefits of calorie intake
3. ❖ Establishment of normal social habits - encouraging establishment of normalcy
4. ❖ Computerised meal monitoring - providing feedback on quantity, rate of consumption and nutritional value, to help establish normal eating habits
5. ❖ Reduction and cessation of psychoactive drugs

She said 76 per cent of anorexic sufferers who entered the trial had been unsuccessfully treated by standard care procedures, resulting in a higher remission rate than any other clinic. Patients were classified as in remission when they demonstrated normalisation of body weight, eating behaviour, feelings of fullness, psychological status, level of depression, anxiety and obsessive behaviour.

"More than one million Australians suffer from an eating disorder and if left untreated, the consequences can be severe with mortality rates 6-12 times higher than that of the general population<sup>2</sup>," said Dr Bergh.

The treatments, which to remission can take 12.5 months, are only offered in Australia at the Melbourne Mandometer Clinic. They are not Medicare approved and the out-patient care cost at the Brighton clinic can range between \$30k to \$50k.

#### References

1. Arcelus, Mitchell, Wales & Nielsen, 2011; Franko et al., 2013; Rosling, Sparen, Norring & Von Knorring, 2011
2. Franko et al., 2013; Rosling, Sparen, Norring & Von Knorring, 2011; Selby et al., 2010