



Hope at last for anorexia patients

Recovery rates up for sufferers

EXCLUSIVE

LISA POWER

HAPPY and glowing with health, Laura Beverley is chasing her dream to shine as an actress.

Diagnosed as anorexic at 12, Ms Beverley took part in a treatment program that challenges the view that mental illness is the cause of eating disorders. Convinced that psychological problems are instead caused by the body starving, a team of international scientists used heat therapy to prevent calorie loss, reduced exercise, monitored meals and reduced or stopped psychoactive drugs.

Seventy five per cent of the 1428 patients treated in six clinics, including Melbourne's Mandometer Clinic, were in remission following a year of treatment, the Swedish research said. Just 10 per cent relapsed after five years. In

contrast, conventional treatments have less than 50 per cent of patients reaching remission, they claim.

"Our research found that calorie restriction through dieting causes eating disorders due to the dopamine response that initiates a feeling of reward," said Dr Cecilia Bergh, whose work has been published in the journal Behavioural Neuroscience. "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, so treatment programs need to address this."

She said their program had no mortalities.

Ms Beverley, now 20, said she had been hospitalised and tube fed before travelling overseas as a 13-year-old to try the Mandometer method. "Now I am pursuing acting and also studying photography."

Nearly a million Australians are affected by eating disorders. But the nation's peak eating disorder group The Butterfly Foundation warned any treatment program that does not recognise eating disorders as serious mental illnesses was concerning.

Butterfly CEO Christine Morgan said recovery required more than clinical treatment. "For an eating disorders treatment to be able to claim success it must meet all accepted criteria for recovery," she said.

"Recovery from an eating disorder is determined when both the physical symptoms and the underlying serious mental illnesses are addressed."

For support contact the National Eating Disorders Support Line on 1800 334 673.



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Laura Beverley
has overcome
anorexia. Picture:
Sam Ruttyn