

Treatment of anorexia nervosa: a multimethod investigation translating experimental neuroscience into clinical practice

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Anorexia nervosa (AN) is an eating disorder (ED) with serious consequences for sufferers and their families. We do not currently know how best to treat people with AN, especially those with a severe illness. We carried out 10 studies to improve our understanding.

We evaluated six interventions: teacher training on managing EDs, school lessons aiming to prevent EDs, an outpatient talking therapy for adults, an inpatient treatment for adults, an intervention for carers of people with AN, and an online intervention to prevent relapse after treatment.

We also studied two things that will help us to develop better treatments in the future: the levels of physical activity (PA) in people with AN, and fertility problems in women with EDs and the growth and diet of their children.

Finally, we studied the importance of specialist services in treating EDs and the cost of treatments for AN and the total costs of AN in England each year.

We found that participants liked the new interventions; most of the interventions were more helpful than treatment as usual; the new outpatient treatment was as helpful as an established gold-standard treatment and better liked; people with EDs were different from healthy individuals in some aspects of their PA, their fertility, and the growth and diet of their children; having access to specialist services meant that patients had more positive experiences; and AN costs between £45M and £230M in England each year.

Overall, these studies have greatly improved our understanding of how best to help individuals with AN.

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