The Effectiveness of Day Hospital Treatment for Anorexia Nervosa
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The Day Hospital (DH) Program at Toronto General Hospital in Canada has been in operation for over 25 years and has provided treatment for over 400 patients with anorexia nervosa. Treatment is provided within an intensive group therapy context and the focus is on behavioural change and weight restoration. Patients receive structured assessments at the beginning and end of treatment and a subset have been assessed 12 months after the end of treatment. The early termination rate is 18% and those who leave within the first four weeks have lower BMIs, lower self-esteem and higher depression. Over an average of 12 weeks of DH treatment, patients make significant improvements in weight, bingeing and purging frequencies, depression, self-esteem and eating disordered thoughts and attitudes. About half of AN patients, regardless of subtype, are weight restored at the end of treatment, while only 23% of AN-BP patients are both weight restored and free of bingeing and purging symptoms. Better outcome at the end of treatment is associated with higher BMI at admission and larger weight gain during the first few weeks of treatment. At 12 month follow-up, 53% of AN-R patients and 15% of AN-BP patients have maintained a good to moderate outcome and do not meet diagnostic criteria for AN or BN. In addition to interruption of target symptoms, the utility of the DH as a therapeutic environment that can inspire hope and enhance motivation is discussed.