2005-2006 Expertise Mobilization Award

Eating disorders research projects
Dr. Annick Buchholz, Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario
*Supporting the analysis of eating disorder pilot data from the REAL study to facilitate a follow-up research proposal based on a biopsychosocial model of eating and weight in adolescents. The recipient will also publish and disseminate the BodySense prevention program for young Ontario athletes.*

The Purpose

- To conduct preliminary analyses of REAL study data to support the development of a research proposal for a longitudinal follow-up investigation of a biopsychosocial model of eating and weight in adolescents.
- To facilitate knowledge exchange and dissemination of the BodySense program for community-based prevention of eating disorders in young athletes.

The Problem

Body dissatisfaction, disordered eating and weight problems are widespread among Ontario youth and carry serious psychological, social and medical risks. While awareness of eating disorders appears to have increased, there continues to be a dearth of information on treatment effectiveness and a strong need to enhance prevention and screening programs.

The Plan

The award recipient will dedicate two days per week for one calendar year to supporting two ongoing projects related to adolescent eating disorders. The first project, called the REAL study, is a school-based research initiative examining biological, environmental and individual correlates of poor body image, disordered eating and unhealthy weight in youth. The award recipient will use her dedicated time to conduct preliminary analyses of pilot data and contribute to a follow-up research proposal for a larger-scale longitudinal study of the biopsychosocial model resulting from the REAL data.

BodySense is a successful program aimed at preventing disordered eating among young female athletes. Its developers have recently received funding to widen the program’s implementation to three sports – diving, gymnastics and figure skating. The award recipient will use her dedicated time to facilitate this expansion by publishing journal articles and making academic and community presentations about the BodySense program and its benefits.

The Potential

The biopsychosocial model of eating and weight in adolescents produced and tested in the REAL study will contribute to wider social awareness of key areas of development in youth and facilitate the formulation and implementation of effective community-based education and prevention programs. The BodySense expansion will promote a sport environment in Ontario in which young participants can positively experience their bodies and selves.
The recipient spent her protected time supporting the progress and promotion of two research projects, the REAL study and BodySense. REAL study data was collected from students at 11 high schools in the region and was prepared for analysis. Funding was secured for the longitudinal component of this study and a draft journal article has examined the social-emotional correlates of body esteem in youth. Three paper presentations have been submitted with one confirmed to take place at the International Conference of Eating Disorders in Baltimore.

The recipient also participated on a discussion panel at the same conference on behalf of BodySense. Further knowledge dissemination activities have included poster presentations, the creation of a manuscript on risk factors for eating disorders in athletes, and the publication of an article in Eating Disorders: Journal of Treatment and Prevention entitled ‘BodySense: An evaluation of a positive body image intervention on sport climate for female athletes’.

Amount awarded: $40,000.00
Final report received: November 30, 2007
Region: Eastern