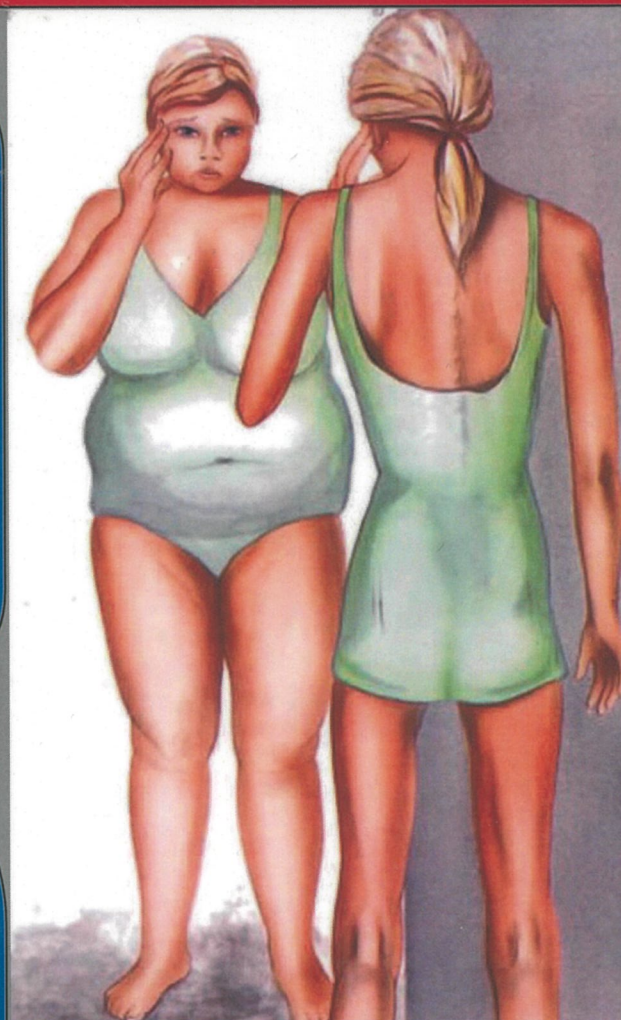


What are the most effective ways to optimise the positive health outcomes for patients suffering from anorexia nervosa?

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What is Anorexia Nervosa?

Anorexia nervosa is a complex and usually chronic psychiatric illness with potentially fatal medical complications. Individuals that suffer from anorexia nervosa tend to lose weight by radically reducing their food intake and sharply increasing the amount of physical exercise they partake in. Often the affected individual has a distorted view of themselves and their weight, usually believing that they are overweight, when they are grossly underweight. Anorexia nervosa occurs in both males and females but is more common in females, especially young females (11-18 years old).



What are the ways to optimise positive health outcomes?

Anorexia nervosa has some of the poorest long term health outcomes of any psychiatric illness so it is important that the ways of achieving positive health outcomes are understood. The two most effective ways of ensuring positive health outcomes are early detection and correct treatment of the disorder.

Early intervention

Early intervention is the most effective form of treatment. It allows the individual to combat the disorder before the behaviours of anorexia nervosa are set and the disorder becomes a chronic illness.

Treatment options

The most common form of treatment is a multidisciplinary team approach with medical, nutritional and mental health specialists. The treatment is likely to be outpatient based, but can be completed in an inpatient setting.. There are three main options for treatment that are often used in conjunction. These are pharmacological intervention, nutritional therapy and psychotherapy. Treatment usually takes 5-7 years for a full recovery. Full recovery rates currently sit at approx. 50% of patients and this can take between 5-7 years.

Treatment for anorexia nervosa can be difficult as the affected individuals are often in denial and are 'treatment resistant'. This makes treatment often hard to initiate. As early intervention is key in effective treatment, it is important that health professionals are aware of the warning signs of anorexia nervosa and are able to act on them. The majority of patients that have anorexia nervosa are in denial about their illness, so it is often concerned parents and friends that are the ones who seek help on behalf of the person suffering.



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