

Breakthrough Mental Research Foundation

PhD Scholarship in Eating Disorders

Background

Eating disorders (EDs) are serious mental health disorders. Around 15% of Australian girls will experience an ED by the time they are 19 years old and disordered eating (DE) affects 23% of young Australian women with long-term detrimental impacts on physical and mental quality of life. Males account for one in four cases of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, and approximately one third of community adults reporting DE in Australia.

EDs have amongst the highest mortality of any psychiatric disorder. They are associated with higher rates of medical problems including diabetes, hypertension and dyslipidaemia independent of obesity and co-occurring psychiatric disorders. EDs in adolescence lead to increased risk of poor mental health in early adulthood, including: substance abuse, deliberate self-harm, suicide attempts, and depressive and anxiety disorders; as well as a range of serious medical problems: cardiovascular symptoms, chronic fatigue, chronic pain, osteoporosis, infectious diseases, neurological symptoms, and adverse weight outcomes. In 2012, 913,000 Australians were estimated to be currently experiencing an ED at a socioeconomic cost of \$69.7 billion.

Only 25% of people with an ED seek treatment. Many adolescents and their families report considerable barriers to receiving timely and appropriate diagnosis and treatment, including limited access to services with long waiting lists, often resulting in increased dropout.

In the absence of adequate early detection and intervention, current outpatient treatments in tertiary settings only assist around 28% to 49% to full remission of symptoms: even treatments with the strongest evidence base are unable to achieve better remission rates.

Topic

Under the supervision of Matthew Flinders Distinguished [Professor Tracey Wade](#) and within the [Blackbird Initiative](#) of [Órama Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing](#), the purpose of this PhD scholarship is to explore real world solutions, ensuring the best interventions are available to people with eating disorders.

Specific topics can be negotiated, but current foci include:

- Offering low-intensity waitlist interventions (children and adults) that can result in benefit for people with eating disorders and their significant others;
- Examining strategies that can result in people seeking and obtaining help as early as possible for an eating disorder.

Details

[Breakthrough Mental Health Foundation](#) are funding a stipend of \$40,000 per year tax free, for up to 3 years and are tenable within the Órama Institute and College of Education, Psychology and Social Work; Flinders University (Adelaide, South Australia).

Awards will normally only be available to those who:

- Have completed at least four years of tertiary education studies at a high level of achievement and or the equivalent of an undergraduate degree with Honours as assessed by the Australian Psychological Society (APS) if the degree was not obtained in Australia;
- Are enrolling as full-time students (part-time awards are available in certain circumstances);
- Have applied for admission into a Doctor of Philosophy by research or Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) at Flinders University. For detailed information on the admission process, please go to <https://students.flinders.edu.au/my-course/apply/apply-research-degree>.

Applications

Interested applicants should email Matthew Flinders Distinguished [Professor Tracey Wade \(tracey.wade@flinders.edu.au\)](mailto:tracey.wade@flinders.edu.au) prior to submitting a PhD application to discuss a possible research topic. Applicants applying for this scholarship will need to send Professor Wade the following:

- CV including previous research experience and any publications;
- Contact details for 2 professional referees;
- Scanned copies of Academic Transcripts;
- A copy of an application for a PhD at Flinders University;
- A one-page summary of the research area discussed with Professor Wade;
- An APS equivalency letter if current qualifications have been obtained outside of Australia;
- If from a non-English speaking background, proof of sufficient proficiency in the English language (either an International English Language Testing System [IELTS] score of 7, a tertiary degree from an English speaking country, or evidence of completion of an English program from an approved provider).

Applications close 31st October 2020

This project is funded by Breakthrough Mental Health Research Foundation and will be undertaken within the Órama Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Flinders University.