

61

**Understanding attitudes towards the integration of obesity and eating disorders health promotion among key stakeholders: A focus group study**



Bianca Bullivant<sup>1,\*</sup>, Jonathan Mond<sup>1</sup>, Deborah Mitchison<sup>1</sup>, Clare Stephens<sup>1</sup>, Jessie Stephens<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8</sup>, Aaron Denham<sup>2</sup>, Rebecca Olson<sup>3</sup>, Timothy Gill<sup>4</sup>, Stephen Touyz<sup>5</sup>, Ian Caterson<sup>4</sup>, Sarah Maguire<sup>4</sup>, Phillipa Hay<sup>6</sup>, Bryan Rodgers<sup>7</sup>, Dick Stevenson<sup>1</sup>, Janet Latner<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Department of Psychology, Macquarie University, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>2</sup> *Department of Anthropology, Macquarie University, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>3</sup> *School of Social Science, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia*

<sup>4</sup> *Boden Institute of Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise & Eating Disorders, The University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>5</sup> *School of Psychology, The University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>6</sup> *School of Medicine, Western Sydney University, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>7</sup> *School of Sociology, Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia*

<sup>8</sup> *Department of Psychology, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA*

In the past three decades, there has been a substantial increase in prevalence of both obesity and eating-disordered behaviours (EDB). There are strong empirical and conceptual arguments to support initiatives that aim to simultaneously prevent obesity and EDB. However, the perceived acceptability of integrated programs among the public, health professionals, and other key stakeholders is largely unknown. The lack of this information is a major barrier to health promotion efforts. With a view to redressing this situation, we conducted focus groups with a broad range of health profes-

sionals at the 2015 Eating Disorders and Obesity Conference.

The goal of this presentation is to summarise the key findings from this research. Issues addressed included: knowledge and beliefs concerning the relative importance of eating disorders and obesity as public health problems requiring attention; beliefs about the desirability and feasibility of an integrated approach to prevention; and beliefs about the specific health promotion messages likely to be most effective in the context of an integrated approach. Using a grounded theory framework, three interdisciplinary focus groups were conducted with a total of 24 participants including doctors, mental health professionals, dieticians, academics, teachers and consumer group representatives.

Themes that emerged included: scepticism regarding the feasibility of integrating obesity and EDB prevention/health promotion messages; poor awareness and understanding of EDB relative to obesity; broad support for health promotion messages focusing on health and well-being, body diversity, a balanced diet, and physical activity; the need to target youth in prevention/health promotion campaigns; broad support for government regulation of factors affecting individuals' diet and physical activity; and a strong belief in the role of the environment in people's health decisions/behaviours. The implications of these findings will be discussed, along with plans for the conduct of further focus groups and for the next, quantitative phase of the research.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orcp.2016.10.062>