

Eating Disorder Organizations Join Forces to Urge Focus on Health and Lifestyle Rather Than Weight

Deerfield, IL (December 10, 2009) -- In an unprecedented show of concern, The Academy for Eating Disorders (AED), Binge Eating Disorder Association (BEDA), Eating Disorder Coalition (EDC), International Association for Eating Disorder Professionals (iadep), and National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA) have joined forces and are urging focus on health and lifestyle rather than weight as a measurement of well-being.

In late November, media stories reported that an American university implemented a new strategy for combating rising weights by requiring students to be weighed during their freshman year. Those with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or over are required either to lose weight or pass an extra course focused on physical fitness. In response to this, and other similar strategies within the global “war against obesity”, national and international eating disorder organizations have joined forces to urge school administrators, employers, and health policy makers to focus more on health and lifestyle for all populations rather than on weight alone.

Eating disorder groups assert that this well-intended, but under-informed and unproven strategy of focusing on BMI fuels weight-prejudice and neglects groups which may be in equal need of improving their health and lifestyle. There is concern that, in some cases, the programs contribute to negative self-esteem, body dissatisfaction and eating disordered behaviors among young people. Neither the scale nor BMI calculation provide the full picture most relevant to health status, such as lifestyle and activity patterns, and physical and mental health measures. Thus, assuming ill health based on weight alone is not only inappropriate but harmful and discriminatory, and should be discontinued.

“There is concern that we have lost sight of avoiding harm in the process of addressing obesity.” AED President Susan Paxton, PhD, FAED states. “Further, we cannot ignore the opportunity to create a

healthier environment, where people of all sizes are given the opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives, instead of singling out individual groups for reform based on weight alone”.

Paxton continues, “it is our hope that societies throughout the world can join hands in fighting for healthier lifestyles and increased respect for people of all sizes, thus simultaneously promoting all aspects of health (i.e., physical, social, and emotional) within our communities.”

The AED has developed “**Guidelines for Obesity Prevention Programs**” (<http://www.aedweb.org>), which are intended to address the issues illustrated by the above example, and the more global issues in combating rising weights. Additionally, the EDC has developed talking points regarding BMI testing (<http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org/documents/TalkingpointsBMI.pdf>).

Academy for Eating Disorders (AED) is a global professional association committed to leadership in eating disorders research, education, treatment, and prevention. For more information go to www.aedweb.org.

Binge Eating Disorder Association (BEDA) is a national organization focusing on the need to increase prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for binge eating disorder. BEDA is committed to facilitating awareness, high quality of care, and recovery for those who live and those who work with binge eating disorder through outreach and support, education, and resources. For more information go to www.bedaonline.com.

The Eating Disorders Coalition (EDC) is a federal public policy organization that works to advance the federal recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority. For more information go to www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org.

International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals (iaedp) promotes a high level of professionalism among practitioners who treat those suffering from eating disorders by promoting ethical and professional standards, offering education and training in the field, certifying those who have met prescribed requirements, promoting public and professional awareness of eating disorders and assisting in prevention efforts. For more information go to www.iaedp.org.

National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA) supports individuals and families affected by eating disorders, and serves as a catalyst for prevention, cures and access to quality care. For more information go to www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

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