

**MEDIA RELEASE: Embargoed until 7am Wednesday August 4, 2021**

**AUSTRALIAN FIRST RESEARCH TO STUDY FITNESS PROFESSIONALS AND THE DETECTION OF EATING DISORDERS AMONG THEIR CLIENTS**

KEY POINTS:

* **New, Australian-first study into fitness professionals and the detection of eating disorders among clients launched today.**
* **Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses affecting approximately 1 million Australians.**
* **The highest users of gyms and fitness activities are also those most at risk of developing an eating disorder - women aged 18-34**
* **The study aims to ensure exercise professionals are properly trained to respond to, and manage, clientele with eating disorders.**

InsideOut Institute for Eating Disorders and the University of Sydney, supported by Fitness Australia, has today launched new research into fitness professionals and the detection of eating disorders among their clients, to ensure those most at risk are getting the help they need, earlier.

Around 1 million Australians are currently living with an eating disorder 1. But only one in four are seeking treatment 2.

InsideOut Director and Clinical Psychologist Dr Sarah Maguire from the University of Sydney says exercise promotes health for most people, but it can be a harmful pursuit for those living with an eating disorder.

“Many people living with eating disorders engage in excessive exercise, typically to try and control weight and shape and mood. Research suggests that, among those with anorexia nervosa, up to 81% of adults exercise excessively during acute phases of the illness 3.”

“Excessive exercise can place individuals with eating disorders at risk, physically and psychologically.”

“When exercise takes on an addictive quality, individuals may experience intense guilt, negative emotionality or anxiety when exercise is missed or postponed.”

Dr Sarah Maguire says fitness professionals - such as personal trainers and gym instructors - can play an important role when it comes the early detection of eating disorders.

“We know that the highest users of gyms and fitness activities are also those most at risk of developing an eating disorder - women aged 18-34 4.”

“Fitness professionals are really on the frontline when it comes to this illness, because they’re seeing clients that may have an eating disorder or are at risk of developing one.

“We need to make sure fitness professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and manage clients with eating disorders and refer them for treatment, it can be an overwhelming experience for them to be the only one managing a situation like this one, and this new research will help us do that.”

“The results will also assist in our understanding of the awareness and effectiveness of industry guidelines in identifying and supporting clients with eating disorders.”

Fitness Australia CEO Barrie Elvish says fitness professionals and businesses have an essential role to play when it comes to eating disorders.

“Exercise professionals can play a vital role in recovery, by working collaboratively with a treatment team.”

“As the peak industry association, Fitness Australia is committed to being part of the solution for people with eating disorders, which means ensuring our registered and accredited exercise professionals have access to the best available training.”

“That’s why we’re supporting InsideOut’s research in this area and encouraging fitness professionals to anonymously share their experience and understanding of eating disorders, by way of InsideOut’s online survey.”

**The survey can be found at** [**www.insideoutinstitute.org.au**](http://www.insideoutinstitute.org.au)

***For all media inquiries please contact InsideOut: Claire 0424 850 449*** [**claire@insideoutinstitute.org.au**](mailto:claire@insideoutinstitute.org.au)

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| ***We encourage reporting about lived experience of an eating disorder, but please be mindful in how it is portrayed.***  Be careful **not** to:   * Mention specific weights, measurements, weight loss, quantities. * Detail specific behaviours * Post images of people with extreme body weights or before/after pictures * Glamourise eating disorders. * Use the terms sufferer, patient, anorexic or bulimic to describe someone with an eating disorder, instead use “person with an eating disorder”.   More information about reporting and portrayal of eating disorders here:<https://insideoutinstitute.org.au/assets/nedc-mindframe-reporting-guidelines.pdf> |

**Declaration:** This study is approved by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee, project no. 2012/245

**About InsideOut**

*The InsideOut Institute for Eating Disorders – a collaboration between the Sydney Local Health District and the University of Sydney’s Faculty of Medicine and Health, based at the University’s Charles Perkins Centre – aims to ensure every Australian living with an eating disorder has access to the best possible care by rethinking eating disorders from the ‘inside out’. Visit* [*insideoutinstitute.org.au*](https://insideoutinstitute.org.au/)

**About Fitness Australia**

*Fitness Australia is a not-for-profit industry association, that exists to professionalise the fitness industry through engaging in partnerships, advocacy, delivering education, quality and accreditation. Fitness Australia supports the industry to deliver an environment for more Australians to adopt a healthy, active lifestyle*

**Support available:**  
**If you are experiencing distress and need support, you can contact:**  
  
**The Butterfly National Helpline 1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673)**

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Beyond Blue:1300 22 46 36.  
Suicide Callback Service: 1300 659 467  
MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978  
Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800  
Headspace: 1800 650 890  
ReachOut: au.reachout.com

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