

Creating Culturally Appropriate Educational Content: Coping with an Eating Disorder During Ramadan



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Background & Significance

- •Eating disorders (ED) are commonly seen as a disease that exclusively affects thin, white, cis women.¹
- •ED may also be less recognized in certain communities as a legitimate illness and treated as a taboo subject.¹
- •Even with a diagnosis, people of color (POC) face greater barriers to treatment and less support than non-POC.¹
- The idea that eating disorders are a strictly "Western disease" and not something that can and does affect Muslim youth and young adults can worsen the shame, guilt, and isolation of those struggling with disordered eating.²
- •The SCH Adolescent Clinic experiences an increase in visits for ED care during and around Ramadan and does not currently have a resource for to support adolescents in this situation.

Ramadan & Eating Disorders

- •Ramadan is a holy month celebrated by Muslims during which observers fast from sunrise to sunset, abstaining from food and drink for anywhere between 10-20 hours at a time.²
- •Young people who observe Ramadan are especially susceptible to the exacerbation of ED behavior around this time, as the eating pattern associated with a sustained fast may mirror or reinforce disordered eating behaviors.²
- •Although those who are ill are exempt from fasting, young people diagnosed with ED may choose to fast anyway, putting them at risk of disorder exacerbation or relapse.²

Objective

The aim of this project was to create a culturally appropriate resource to support adolescents receiving care for an eating disorder and their families who observe Ramadan.

Recommendations for Patients and Families

- Patients should work closely with their interdisciplinary team (Adolescent Medicine provider, Adolescent dietitian, and therapist) and consider working with an imam or other religious consultant for a custom-tailored approach.
- Parents should remind their child that an eating disorder is a serious illness, and as such, they are exempt from fasting at Ramadan, especially if they have not yet reached puberty.
- Families should work together to identify other ways to participate in Ramadan and consider how to move the emphasis away from fasting to other types of worship.
- Parents should set aside time to talk to their child before family gathering or meals at least a few hours before the activity.
- Parents should speak with extended family members and friends who may be breaking fast with their family about trying to use more neutral language around food during this month.

Methods **Step 1:** Literature Review Step 2: Draft Handout Met with SCH Librarian Step 3: Step 4: Revision Process Interprofessional Review Consolidated input of multiple disciplines to ensure comprehensive and consistent messaging Step 5: Reach out to Step 6: Formatting, Community Translation & Distribution Original plan: hold focus group; due to COVID-19; this was no Patient and **Family** longer a viable option. Education Requested Family Review Services Somali Health Board of Seattle (response pending)

Sources & Acknowledgments

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^{1,2}References available upon request.