

NIHR ARC West Midlands – Project Details
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Ethnic variations in access to treatment for eating disorders in multicultural England, with special focus on young people.

Eating disorders (EDs) are serious psychiatric conditions characterised by disordered eating and/or weight-control behaviours that significantly impact quality of life, physical health, and psychosocial functioning. EDs are associated with the highest mortality and morbidity of all mental health disorders causing high economic burden. The risk of onset is highest during adolescence. There are studies showing there are no or few ethnic differences in the prevalence or presentation of eating disorders and that there are many overlapping risk factors. Many of these studies have also shown that despite many similarities between ethnic groups, ethnic minorities are less likely to seek help or be referred to specialist eating disorder services by their GP. The majority of these studies have been conducted either in the United States and/or have targeted (young) adults aged 16+ and/or have focused on certain ethnic minority groups (e.g., South Asians in the UK). We therefore do not know whether there are any significant ethnic differences in eating disorder prevalence, referrals, clinical presentation and treatment among younger people in the UK. The overall aim of the research will be to explore ethnic variations in pathways to care, admission, clinical presentation and treatment to eating disorder specialist care in England. The main objectives are to:

- 1) Explore ethnic variations in the offer and uptake of treatment for people in specialist eating disorder services across the West Midlands;
- 2) Examine whether there are any differences in eating disorder admissions and clinical presentation, regarding people of different ethnic backgrounds;
- 3) Explore service provider and user experiences regarding access and uptake of treatment for eating disorders.

The findings from the study will contribute to efforts to reduce inequalities regarding ED service provision and access to care for young people of various ethnic backgrounds.