



Press Release

Immediate Release

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### **Cygnet Hosts Its First Eating Disorder Conference**

More than 100 delegates attended an Eating Disorders Conference hosted by leading health and social care provider, Cygnet, at the prestigious Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Under the theme 'Perspectives on the Inpatient Eating Disorder Journey,' the pioneering conference gathered esteemed speakers from the Cygnet Health Care division, the NHS, public and independent sectors, as well as Experts by Experience – those with lived experiences of eating disorders.

The conference was split in to three sessions which were chaired by Dr Amit Mistry, Consultant Psychiatrist at Cygnet Hospital Ealing, and Raf Hamaizia, Cygnet's Expert by Experience Lead.

The sessions covered a variety of topics, including navigating the inpatient eating disorders journey, neurodevelopmental needs within inpatient settings, managing unhealthy exercise patterns, expertise as the carer, and understanding the commissioning landscape for eating disorder services. At the end of each session delegates had the opportunity to engage further in a panel question and answer session.

The conference was opened by Dr Mistry who then went on to talk about the service provided at Sunrise Ward, Cygnet Hospital Ealing's specialist eating disorder unit. Dr Mistry also talked about the development of the service's model of care.

Dr Mistry's presentation was followed by Jacqui Russon, Head of Occupational Therapy at Cygnet Hospital Ealing, who talked in more detail about the role of the multi-disciplinary team on Sunrise Ward and, in a recurring theme of the conference, the importance of including family and carers in the care of their loved ones.

The final presentation in the first session was from former Cygnet Hospital Ealing service users, Emily Hale who gave an honest overview of her own personal eating disorder journey.

She said: "I've had really good responses from people. They've said how inspiring it was and other people have said how everyone was really engaged. I think it is really important because you don't know what things are like fully until you've lived it."

In the second session of the day the conference heard from Dr Agnes Ayton, Consultant Psychiatrist at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, who talked about managing eating disorder comorbidity in an inpatient eating disorder ward. Agnes was followed by Dr Caz Nahman, Consultant Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Psychiatrist at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, who talked about managing unhealthy exercise patterns on inpatient eating disorder wards. Caz highlighted the risks of societal attitudes towards exercise and the problems of exercise being the only tool to manage distress, anxiety, etc.

The final speaker in the second session was Dr Caroline Fleming, Head of Psychology at Cygnet Hospital Ealing, who looked at the neurodevelopmental needs within eating disorder inpatient settings. Caroline shared research that 17% of inpatients within an eating disorder inpatient service had suspected autism spectrum disorder. Caroline talked about how the service at Cygnet Hospital Ealing had adapted its model of care for this cohort and how they utilised therapeutic interventions such as Cognitive Remediation Therapy (CRT) and Cognitive Remediation and Emotion Skills Training (CREST).

The final session of the day was chaired by Raf Hamaizia who spoke about his journey from inpatient services to leading Cygnet's Expert by Experience programme. Raf talked about the importance of co-production and how vital it is that services utilise those with genuine and relevant lived experience.

Raf was followed by Jenny Langley, Author and New Maudsley Carer Skills Facilitator, who gave a really powerful talk about her journey as the mother of a young man with anorexia and how important it is that carers are supported on their own emotional journey.

Following her presentation Jenny said: "When Amit and the team asked me to speak, I was so chuffed because I always have a bit of imposter syndrome because I'm not a clinician. The whole ethos of what we're doing is that carers are amazing. They are such an important part of the care pathway and they are there when the clinicians are long gone. So the more I can talk to clinicians about what we're doing to support the carers the more clinicians understand how important that is."

The final talk of the day was from Fiona Lander and Kathryn Weaver, Operations Manager and Case Manager for CAMHS T4 and AED Provider Collaborative, who gave a joint presentation on understanding the commissioning landscape for adult eating disorder services. They highlighted how the aim of the Provider Collaborative was to improve continuity of care, improve relationships and use local services.

Reflecting on the day Dr Mistry said: "What has been helpful is to get the expertise, not just from the clinicians, but from those with lived experience and from carers as well.

"It is helpful having clinicians providing updates on the evidence base and what is happening within eating disorder services but there is nothing more powerful than having the lived experience perspective and it is quite nice for us to reflect, not just on what we are doing well, but also what we can do better moving forward."

Raf Hamaizia, added: "I think the event was really useful just in the sense that conferences can be quite academic in nature and sometimes they can be very lived experience led so finding that balance of actually hearing from clinicians, hearing from people with lived experience, and hearing different aspects of the journey has been really beneficial."

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**Notes to Editors:**

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