

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEAST Protests Continued Use of “Parentectomy” In Eating Disorder Treatment

WARRENTON, Virginia(January 21, 2009) - Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders (FEAST) calls on all clinicians treating eating disorder patients to end the routine practice of restricting families from contact with loved ones during hospitalization.

Parents were once routinely blamed for causing or failing to prevent eating disorders in their children, and treatment consistently involved removing the patient from the family’s influence, sometimes called “parentectomy.” Although modern science indicates anorexia and bulimia are treatable brain-based disorders, “The legacy of blaming parents and patients for eating disorders lives on in the continued practice of limiting parent access to their children during hospitalization,” says Laura Collins, FEAST’s Director.

Parents of eating disorder patients need and deserve clinical support in understanding and responding to this grave illness. Supporting the family as a whole is one part of supporting the patient’s long-term health.

FEAST calls on all professionals treating eating disorder patients to:

- **Allow the same family and caregiver access to patients as appropriate with any other medical illness**
- **Learn about recent advances in treatment that emphasize family involvement**
- **Set aside outdated prejudices about “over-involved” and “enmeshed” parents**
- **Include parents and other caregivers as an integral part of the treatment team**
- **Communicate with the family in the same way as with any other medical illness**

From the experts:

- “There are very few circumstances in pediatrics under which a parent should be restricted from contact with their own child regardless of the diagnosis... Parents are an essential part of the team, without which there really can be no healing.” (Dr. Julie O’Toole, Kartini Clinic, US)
- “Parents should be part of the treatment team. They should be valued and respected and given the knowledge they need to help make important decisions regarding the care and health of their child.” (Kitty Westin, Anna Westin Foundation, US)
- “Parents are part of the solution, not the problem. If progress made in the hospital is to be maintained post-discharge, parents must be involved from day one.” (Joy Jacobs, JD, PhD, Healthy Bites, US)
- Parents feel overwhelmed and disempowered by the way the condition takes over their lives, and this gets compounded and entangled by the way they are sometimes excluded by professionals and clinicians. Professionals and clinicians are challenged by treating this condition, and some still hold outdated and mistaken views about how parents cause the problem. (Susan Ringwood, beat, UK)
- “I think parents' guilt is significantly amplified when professionals push them to the side. There's an implicit message that they have, in fact, contributed to their child's illness.” (member of FEAST’s Parent Council)

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Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders (FEAST) is an international organization of parents of eating disorder patients.

www.FEAST-ED.org