

International conference on **Adolescent Medicine & Child Psychology**

September 28-30, 2015 Houston, USA

Managing the complex family systems of eating disorder patients

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Anorexia Nervosa (AN) has a lifetime prevalence rate of about 0.9% with a 10-1 ratio female to male with a mortality rate somewhere between 10-20%. This disorder is most prevalent in the adolescent and young adult population. Other eating disorders are less deadly but more prevalent especially in the college-age population. Patients with Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder are less easily identified as their body habitus is not emaciated (like patients with AN) but the impact on social and occupational functioning can be as great. We will discuss the prevalence rate, epidemiology, psychological etiology and potential treatment strategies for the various eating disorders. Treatment includes inpatient hospitalization (most restrictive and most severe of cases) to outpatient therapy, medications (if indicated) and nutrition consultation. Focus will be given to discussing the complex dynamics of the family systems, the impact of transference and counter-transference on the clinician and the possible therapeutic pitfalls. The more classic psychodynamic approach to patient care is becoming more obsolete; however, it remains pertinent in current patient care. With this in mind, we will define and discuss various defense mechanisms, focus on projective identification and apply this to understand how to approach and manage the complicated family systems that often accompany adolescents with Eating Disorders.

Biography

Mathew Nguyen has received his BS in Chemistry and Biology from the University of Houston in 1992. He has graduated from Medical school in 1996 from the University of Texas-Health Science Center at San Antonio. He has completed his Internship in 1997 from Baylor College of Medicine, Adult Psychiatry Residency in 1999 from Georgetown University and his Child/Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship from the University of Florida in 2001. He is currently on Faculty at the University of Florida. Among other duties, he is the Medical Director of Springhill Health Center. He has also served as the Chief of the UF Psychiatry Consultation/Liaison Services as well as participated as a Faculty in the UF Forensic Institute.

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