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HEALTH NEWS

Group targets eating disorders

*A week-long campaign
will reach adolescents
and women in college*

By Kari Thorene
Higher Education Reporter

Fifteen percent of young women have substantially disordered eating attitudes and behaviors, according to Rachel Harding, a University Counseling Center counselor.

Eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating, but there is much more to disordered eating than just those three, Harding said.

"People can be further toward the 'disordered' end of the continuum, exhibiting frequent dieting, emotional eating, or negative body image, without meeting criteria for an eating disorder," she said.

This week is Eating Disorders Awareness Week, which runs from today until Feb. 28. The Eating Disorders and Prevention group picks a theme every year as a focus for the week-long educational campaign; this year, the group is focusing on adolescent and college-age women and their families.

Disordered eating habits have related roots to the actual three eating disorders, said Harding, who is also the coordinator for the awareness week.

"Frequent dieting, an over-emphasis on body size and shape as it relates to self-esteem and compulsive exercising are all related to beliefs about the importance of appearance and what one's body shape and size means about a person," she said.

Environmental matters, like cultural definitions of beauty, can impact a person's eating habits, Harding said.

"There certainly is evidence that as the average weight of models and other ideal images of beauty has decreased, the rate of eating disorders has skyrocketed," she said. "Ordinary women often compare themselves to these picture-perfect, airbrushed images of ideal beauty and feel negatively about themselves. There does seem to be evidence that media can be a powerful influence on the internalized beliefs that people hold about beauty."

But media images are only one factor in many that lead to disor-

Some indicators of disordered-eating

- Chronic dieting
- Negative body image
- Constant worry about food and weight
- Guilt related to eating
- Frequent exercising for the specific purpose of weight loss
- Eating under stress or in reaction to painful emotions
- Alternating cycles of restricting and bingeing
- Feeling "out of control" with eating
- Use of laxatives, diuretics or diet pills

SOURCE: Rachel Harding, University Counseling Center

dered eating habits and eating disorders, Harding said. Other factors include individual personality characteristics, family issues and genetics.

"Among women, body dissatisfaction is normal," Harding said. "There are not many women who are happy with their bodies."

Female doctors report sexual harassment

*A recent survey showed
that medical school was
the most common place
for sexual harassment*

By Brenda C. Coleman
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — More than one-third of female doctors say they have been sexually harassed, according to a survey that suggests the problem isn't disappearing from the medical profession.

Overall, 47.7 percent reported having been targets of gender-based harassment, and 36.9 percent reported having been sexually harassed, researchers said in Monday's issue of the Archives of

Internal Medicine, which was released Sunday.

The 1993-94 nationwide survey did not ask women to specify what behavior they thought constituted harassment, only whether they believed it had occurred.

Younger physicians reported higher rates of sexual harassment than older ones, and medical schools were the most common site, said researchers led by Dr. Erica Frank of Emory University in Atlanta.

"Some may believe that problems of harassment will disappear in time, that they are simply a function of older, sexist physicians still being in practice," the researchers said.

But the data suggest a more complicated picture, they said.

While younger women may be more sensitive to harassment than their older colleagues, the survey suggests that harassment may be worsening in schools and "we may be continuing to train physicians in an environment where harassment is common," they said.

"Present thought characterizes sexual harassment as primarily a manifestation of power, rather than sexual attraction. The profession of medicine, particularly in academic settings, may be especially prone to harassment because of the importance of hierarchy," the researchers said.

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University of Oregon Spring 1998

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