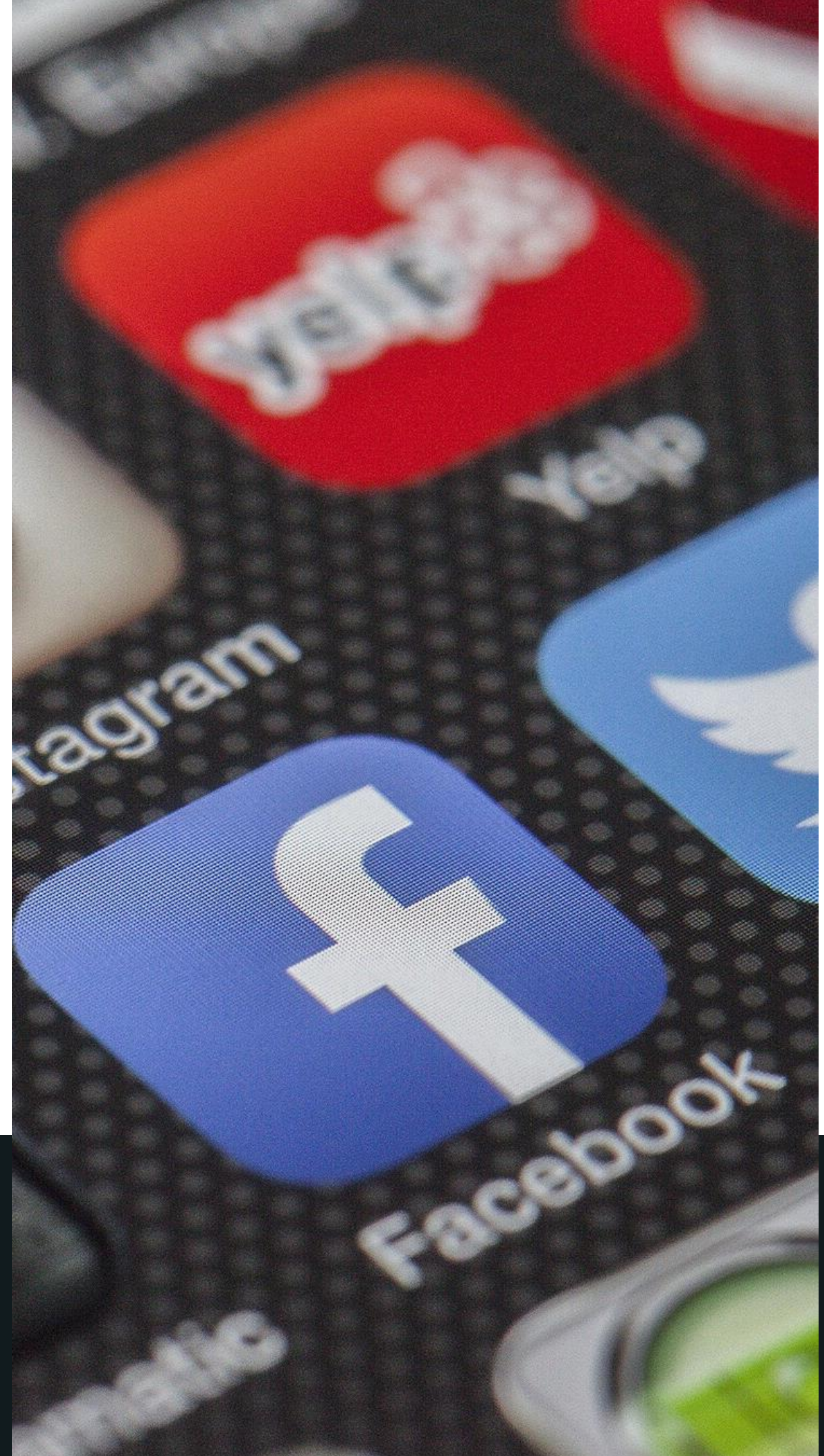


THE REAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

# The Digital Age Eating Disorder

Presented by Accredited Practising Dietitian Georgia  
Houston from GH Nutrition

Saturday 9 November 2019



# Case Study

## INTRODUCING 'KATE'...

- 18-year-old female from Canberra.
- First-year studying Psychology at ANU.
- Confident, happy teenager.
- Two younger brothers.
- Loving parents, self-employed.
- Prestigious girls high school.
- Slight OCD tendencies, perfectionist, high-achiever throughout school.
- Nil eating concerns, parents reported good appetite, often eating the most out of the family.



## KATE

- Falling out with high school friends mixed with new university environment.
- Felt isolated and out of control. Turned to food and exercise.
- Innocently started using Instagram as inspiration and motivation.
- Overnight cut out "bad" foods and took up running. Felt "good".
- Was praised for being healthy and fit.
- Became an obsession.
- Saw a dietitian and psychologist who diagnosed her with "anorexia".
- Enrolled in the ACT Eating Disorders Program.
- Didn't follow through with program or prescribed treatment.

# Case Study

# Case Study

## KATE

- Kate **hated** being skinny.
  - She **didn't want** to lose weight.
  - She **didn't** body check or pinch her fat.
  - She **didn't** under-eat.
- 
- She **didn't** get the help she needed...

- I am Kate and I had the eating disorder Orthorexia Nervosa.
- Because of mistreatment, it was up to my parents and myself to "get better".
- Went to Sydney to see a Nutritionist I connected with.
- Journey is not linear. Still challenging myself in today's health-obsessed world.
- Today I help those with similar challenges.
- I am an Accredited Practising Dietitian with an undergraduate degree in Psychology.
- Speak to schools to get my message across.
- Which brings me to here....today. To educate you for the next 'Kate's' sitting right in front of you.



# How Has Social Media Changed Us?

<https://youtu.be/0EFHbruKEmw>

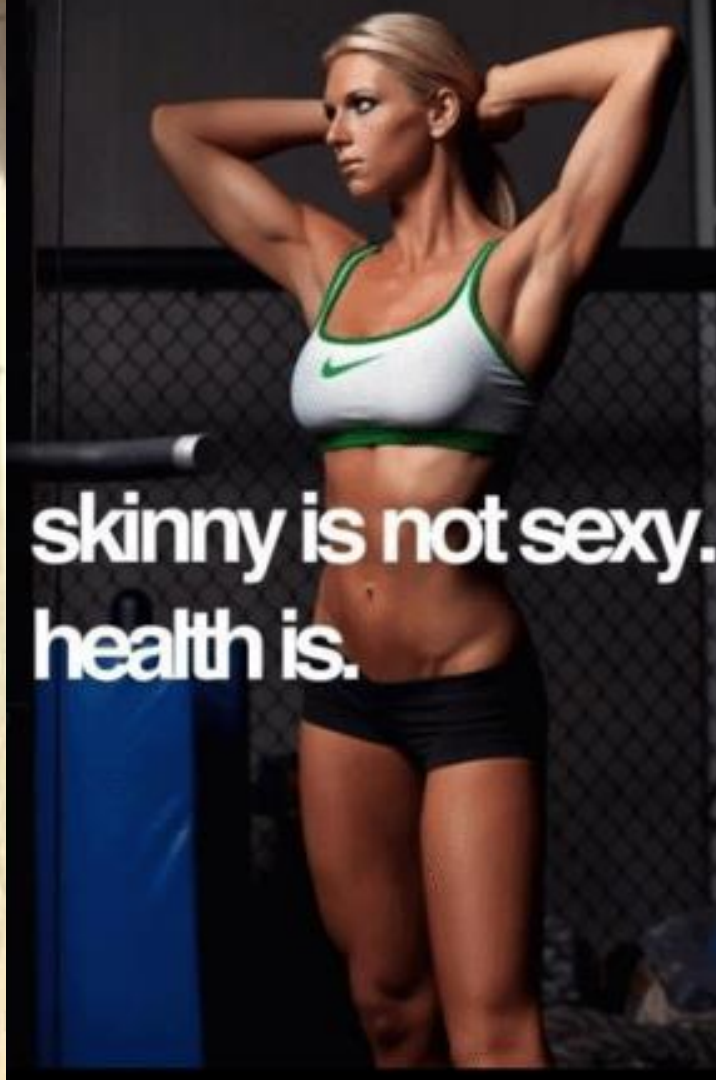


# #Fitspiration

Over 18 million posts on Instagram showcasing photos and videos of toned and tanned bodies, before and after pics, workouts, salad bowls and inspirational quotes.







#fitspo



- Pathological fixation on consuming only healthy food.
- Extreme diet and obsessions with healthy food and proper nutrition are in fact unhealthy.
- Innocent inception, often with a desire to eat healthier, lose weight or treat/prevent an illness.
- Can lead to malnutrition, nutritional deficiencies from excluding food groups, extreme weight loss, impaired daily functioning, social detachment and even death.
- Main difference from anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa = focus on **food quality** as opposed to food quantity.

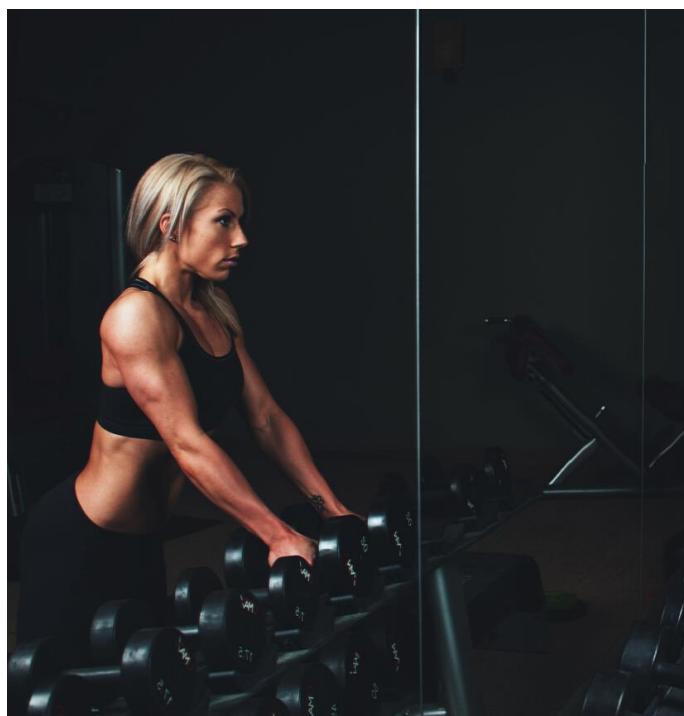
# The Result: Orthorexia Nervosa

# Warning signs and symptoms

- Compulsive checking of ingredient lists and nutritional labels.
- An increase in concern about the health of ingredients.
- Cutting out an increasing number of food groups (all sugar, all carbs, all dairy, all meat, all animal products).
- An inability to eat anything but a narrow group of foods that are deemed 'healthy' or 'pure'.
- Unusual interest in the health of what others are eating.
- Spending hours per day thinking about what food might be served at upcoming events.
- Showing high levels of distress when 'safe' or 'healthy' foods aren't available.
- Obsessive following of food and 'healthy lifestyle' blogs on Twitter and Instagram.
- Body image concerns may or may not be present.



# How does it work



## SOCIAL MEDIA

- Subconsciously compare to 'influencers'.
- Algorithm = shows content you like in order to keep you engaged and using their app.
- The rational part of the brain in teens not fully developed.

## BODY DISSATISFACTION

- Time spent on social media directly correlated to poorer body image.

## EATING DISORDERS

- Negative body image associated with increased eating disorder risk.



STUDY BY TURNER & LEFEVRE, 2017.  
'INSTAGRAM USE IS LINKED TO INCREASED  
SYMPTOMS OF ORTHOREXIA NERVOSA'.

- Higher Instagram use associated with a greater tendency towards ON, with no other social media channel having this effect. Twitter = small positive association.
- 49% of study population (social media users following health accounts) showed ON symptoms, compared to general population (<1%).
- BMI and age had no association with ON.
- Highlights the danger social media can have on psychological wellbeing and the impact of "influencers".
- Also clinical implications for eating disorder development and recovery.



# Treatment

- There are currently no clinical treatments developed specifically for orthorexia, but many eating disorder experts treat orthorexia as a variety of anorexia and/or obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- Thus, treatment usually involves psychotherapy to increase the variety of foods eaten and exposure to anxiety-provoking or feared foods, as well as weight restoration as needed.
- Match them to health professionals they will fit with. May not be the most qualified but if they can identify with them, it means everything for treatment.





# Prevention

- Education to both parents and children on social media use.
- Put down the phone.
- Spring clean their social media and unfollow body-focused accounts.
- Early intervention is key.
- Body positive education throughout schools.
- De-stigmatising eating disorders.



# Questions

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