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Family-Based Treatment (FBT) is the primary treatment recommended for adolescent Anorexia Nervosa (AN) in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) (Lock & Le Grange, 2012). FBT requires caregivers to actively participate in therapy, taking on full responsibility for the food intake of the child with AN in their care. Recent national data have shown a surge in adolescent AN-related hospital admissions during the COVID-19 pandemic, aligning with international trends indicating a gradual, long-term increase in adolescent eating disorder incidence (Hansen et al., 2024). This rise highlights the need for deeper exploration of caregivers' experiences navigating the demands of FBT amid rising treatment demands. Although international quantitative research has identified the significant burden faced by caregivers during FBT, in-depth exploration of these experiences remains limited, with no research conducted in NZ to date (McCord et al., 2025). This study aims to explore the experiences of caregivers who participated alongside their adolescent in FBT for clinical treatment of AN. It will examine the challenges faced and the support received to inform future recommendations for improving support for caregivers in NZ. This study will use a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews with 10 to 15 caregiver participants. Reflexive Thematic Analysis, an analytic approach, will be used to analyse the interview transcripts, generating themes in the data. The findings aim to provide clinicians with insight into caregivers' experiences of FBT and inform improvements to clinical practice and support services for whānau of adolescents with eating disorders in NZ. The presentation will report findings from the data and address each theme, including example excerpts from the transcripts as evidence. It is anticipated that this presentation will appeal to other postgraduate psychology students, whānau of adolescents with AN, and those affiliated with the eating disorder and health sectors.

Keywords

Eating Disorders, Family-Based Treatment (FBT), Anorexia Nervosa (AN), Caregiver Experience, Adolescent Eating Disorders, Qualitative Research, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ)

References

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