Survey finds disordered eating behaviors among three out of four American women

According to the results of a new survey sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and SELF Magazine.

“Our survey found that these behaviors cut across racial and ethnic lines and are not limited to any one group,” says Dr. Cynthia R. Bulik, William and Jeanne Jordan Distinguished Professor of Eating Disorders in the UNC School of Medicine’s department of psychiatry, director of the UNC Eating Disorders Program, and professor of nutrition in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Despite the stereotype that eating disorders affect mostly younger women, the survey found that women in their 30s and 40s reported disordered eating habits at the same rate as women in their 20s.

According to the survey:

- 75 percent of women reported disordered eating behaviors or symptoms consistent with eating disorders.
- 53 percent of dieters are already at a healthy weight and are still trying to lose weight.
- 39 percent of women say concerns about what they eat or weigh interfere with their happiness.
- 27 percent would be “extremely upset” if they gained just five pounds.
- 13 percent smoke to lose weight.

The online survey garnered responses from 4,023 women who answered detailed questions about their eating habits. Results and analysis appeared in SELF’s May 2008 issue available online at www.self.com.

Bulik and study co-author Lauren Rebaharrelson, a third-year UNC clinical psychology graduate student, presented the survey results at the 2008 International Conference on Eating Disorders on May 17, 2008, in Seattle, Wash.

---

School to strengthen computational toxicology and bioinformatics expertise with major U.S. EPA award

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded our School a $3.4 million grant to help strengthen our research portfolio in computational toxicology and bioinformatics.

Computational toxicology is a branch of environmental health sciences that applies mathematical and computer models to predict adverse effects of drugs and environmental chemicals and to better understand the ways they may cause harm to human health and the environment. This relatively young discipline offers the possibility that scientists might be able to develop a much better understanding of risks posed by chemicals released into the environment.

The grant, which will be awarded over four years, aids the establishment of The Carolina Center for Computational Toxicology (http://comptox.unc.edu). The Center will advance the field of computational toxicology through development of new methods and computational tools, as well as through interdisciplinary collaborative efforts within UNC and with other environmental health science researchers.

“We are delighted to receive this highly competitive award,” says Dr. Ivan Rusyn, associate professor of environmental sciences and engineering at the School, associate director of the Curriculum in Toxicology at the UNC School of Medicine, and principal investigator for the project.

“The UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health is a world leader in many areas of science that improve the health of people in North Carolina and around the world, and the new Center will strengthen our capacity for understanding and predicting the inter-individual differences in risk from environmental exposures.”

For a list of other key UNC investigators in the center and more information related to our School’s work in computational toxicology and bioinformatics, visit www.sph.unc.edu/news/epa.html.