

Eating Disorders Are Illnesses, Not Choices: Research Shows Americans Agree

Eating disorders are illnesses with a biological basis modified and influenced by emotional and cultural factors. The stigma associated with eating disorders has long kept individuals suffering in silence, inhibited funding for crucial research and created barriers to treatment. Because of insufficient information, the public and professionals fail to recognize the dangerous consequences of eating disorders. While eating disorders are serious, potentially life threatening illnesses, there is help available and recovery is possible.

In response to the recent media coverage surrounding Terri Schiavo and the lack of acknowledgement that her tragic condition was reportedly brought about by an eating disorder, the National Eating Disorders Association commissioned GMI, Inc. to conduct a poll in an effort to gauge the American public's opinion on eating disorders.

The poll - conducted March 23-24, 2005 with a Nationwide sample of 1,500 adults - showed that:

- 96% of Americans believe eating disorders are serious illnesses.
- 81% believe eating disorders can be successfully treated.
- 76% believe that eating disorders should be covered by insurance companies just like any other illness.

Complete survey results can be found online: http://www.gmipoll.com/docs/NEDA_Briefing.pdf

The poll shows that the public agrees not only that eating disorders are serious illnesses, but that they also deserve - and demand - treatment and adequate insurance coverage.

Reprinted from the National Eating Disorders Association, www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.