

## Un-Doctored

### Un-edited statements from the health sector and beyond

#### New children's book could increase disordered eating

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Eating Difficulties Education Network  
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*Media release from Eating Difficulties Education Network*

The book 'Maggie Goes on a Diet' by Paul Kramer could increase disordered eating and poor body image in children. The children's book tells the story of a girl who goes on a diet and becomes a soccer star. This has sparked concerns amongst those who work with young people experiencing body image and eating difficulties.

Deb Schwarz, Manager of EDEN (the Eating Difficulties Education Network) holds concerns about the book resulting in negative health outcomes for children.

"Research shows poor body image is associated with depression, bullying, eating disorders, risk taking behaviours, and reduced physical activity. Messages like those in the book promote body dissatisfaction." Ironically, the book is being released in October, which is EDEN's Love Your Body month - a time when the organisation promotes body satisfaction nationwide.

There are also concerns about dieting messages increasing disordered eating in children. In New Zealand, between 2007 and 2010, 29 children under 13 were hospitalised for treatment for disordered eating. But this number does not include those who received support from private clinics and institutions.

It seems rates of disordered eating in children are increasing. According to an article published in December, 2010 by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the rate of eating disorders among children has increased dramatically in recent years. The article cites dieting amongst the reasons for this increase.

Schwarz is not surprised by this finding, "The dangers of dieting are nothing new. Even in the 90s there was already evidence linking dieting to developing disordered eating, for example in 1999, Patton (et al) found that the girls who dieted were at least five times more likely to develop an eating disorder. Those who dieted severely were 18 times more likely to develop an eating disorder."

This year, EDEN has been applying for funding to produce children's books aimed at promoting positive body image and preventing disordered eating. Schwarz says, "It is important that children receive positive health messages about their bodies from a young age."

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