

Background & Significance

- Eating disorders (ED) are commonly seen as a disease that exclusively affects thin, white, cis women.¹
- ED may also be less recognized in certain communities as a legitimate illness and treated as a taboo subject.¹
- Even with a diagnosis, people of color (POC) face greater barriers to treatment and less support than non-POC.¹
- The idea that eating disorders are a strictly “Western disease” and not something that can and does affect Muslim youth and young adults can worsen the shame, guilt, and isolation of those struggling with disordered eating.²
- The SCH Adolescent Clinic experiences an increase in visits for ED care during and around Ramadan and does not currently have a resource for to support adolescents in this situation.

Ramadan & Eating Disorders

- Ramadan is a holy month celebrated by Muslims during which observers fast from sunrise to sunset, abstaining from food and drink for anywhere between 10-20 hours at a time.²
- Young people who observe Ramadan are especially susceptible to the exacerbation of ED behavior around this time, as the eating pattern associated with a sustained fast may mirror or reinforce disordered eating behaviors.²
- Although those who are ill are exempt from fasting, young people diagnosed with ED may choose to fast anyway, putting them at risk of disorder exacerbation or relapse.²

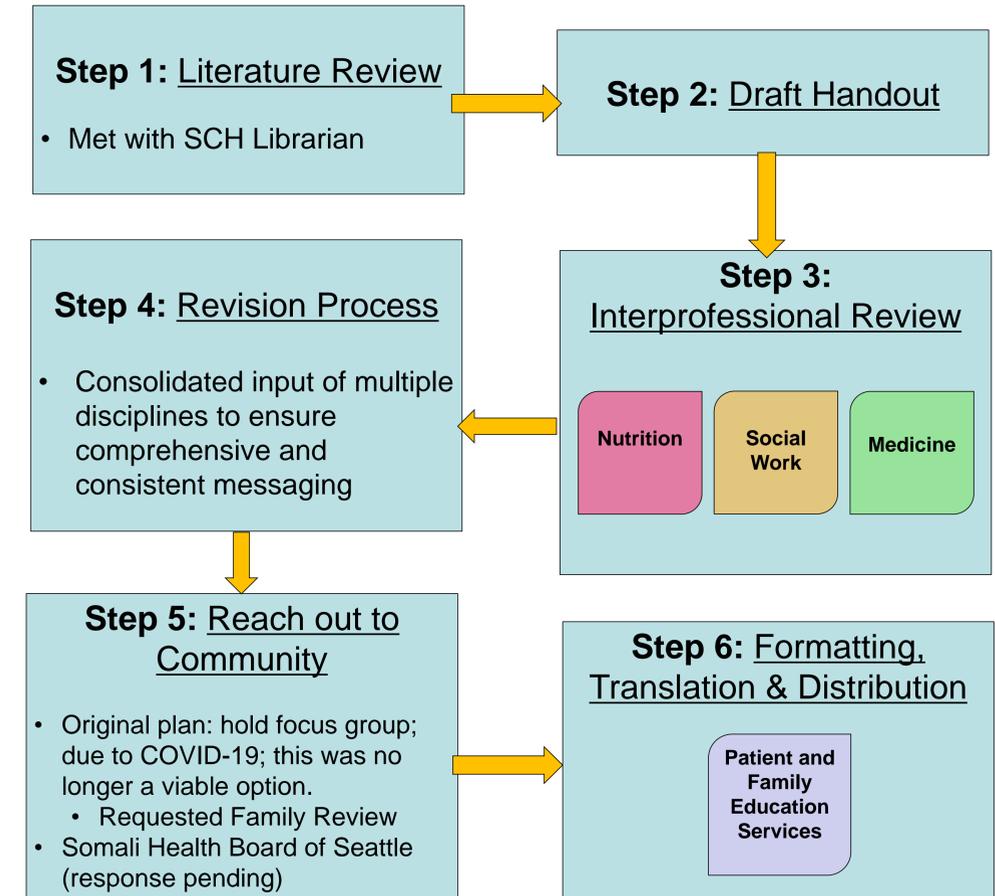
Objective

The aim of this project was to create a culturally appropriate resource to support adolescents receiving care for an eating disorder and their families who observe Ramadan.

Recommendations for Patients and Families

- Patients should work closely with their interdisciplinary team (Adolescent Medicine provider, Adolescent dietitian, and therapist) and consider working with an imam or other religious consultant for a custom-tailored approach.
- Parents should remind their child that an eating disorder is a serious illness, and as such, they are exempt from fasting at Ramadan, especially if they have not yet reached puberty.
- Families should work together to identify other ways to participate in Ramadan and consider how to move the emphasis away from fasting to other types of worship.
- Parents should set aside time to talk to their child before family gathering or meals at least a few hours before the activity.
- Parents should speak with extended family members and friends who may be breaking fast with their family about trying to use more neutral language around food during this month.

Methods



Sources & Acknowledgments

Thank you to the UW LEAH program and faculty, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Seattle Children's Hospital, and the University of Washington.

^{1,2}References available upon request.