Identifying Body Dysmorphic Disorder and Psychological Assessments for People Seeking Cosmetic Surgery

Panellist biographies

Dr Magdalena Simonis
GP, VIC

General Practitioner, Fellow of RACGP, Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne Medical School.

Dr Magdalena Simonis is an active fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and holds a diploma in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Magdalena is actively engaged in GP based research, and is the author of the RACGP handbook: ‘Female Genital Cosmetic Surgery: a guide for general practitioners and other health professionals.’

Magdalena was involved in the development of the Women’s Health Victoria, Labia Library website - aimed at informing women and girls of genital appearance diversity, in the hope that unnecessary anxiety and surgery is avoided.

Dr Gemma Sharp
Psychologist, VIC

Dr Gemma Sharp is a NHMRC Early Career Research Fellow at Monash University in Melbourne.

She completed her PhD in clinical psychology at Flinders University in Adelaide in 2016 which focused on female genital cosmetic surgery and she continues to research this topic through her fellowship.

Dr Sharp is also a clinical psychologist registrar in private practice. In her clinical work, she predominantly assists individuals with body image concerns and eating disorders.

Dr George Blair-West
Psychiatrist, QLD

Dr George Blair-West is an author, researcher and psychiatrist in private practice in Brisbane. He sub-specialises in trauma, eating disorders and relationship/sex therapy.

In the 1990s, as a senior lecturer at The University of Queensland, his peer-reviewed research papers rewrote the textbooks on suicide and depression. His clinical approach around conceptualising and treating depression and suicide was also featured on Australian Story in 2017.

Needing to lose some weight himself, he then turned his focus to the overlooked research into the psychological forces that prevent weight loss. The bestselling ‘Weight Loss for Food Lovers:
Understanding our minds and why we sabotage our weight loss’ (translated into Dutch and Chinese) and related research papers resulted in keynote addresses, a regular spot on the Today breakfast show and media appearances around the world. A children’s book followed and in 2010 he was named one of the top 20 most influential obesity experts in the world.

His inspirational novel, “The Way of The Quest”, was a ‘how to’ of finding one’s meaning and purpose in life and went on to receive three international awards. He was invited to give a TED talk on preventing divorce which was published in April 2018.

Professional interests include trauma-informed psychotherapies, lifestyle medicine, adolescent mental health, early psychosis intervention, psychological and social approaches to psychosis, and GP mental health care provision.

Memberships include Australian Society for Psychological Medicine (www.aspm.org.au), The International Society for Psychological and Social approaches to Psychosis (ISPS) www.isps.org.au and The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) http://www.isst-d.org/.

Facilitator: Dr Mary Emeleus
Psychiatric Registrar, QLD

Dr Mary Emeleus works as a psychiatry registrar in Far North Queensland having commenced psychiatry training in 2017.

Mary previously spent 18 years working as a GP with a mental health special interest, including nine years at headspace sites working in youth mental health, and also as a psychotherapist with both young people and adults.

Currently, Mary’s training and the prospect of exams takes up most of her professional energy but in the past she has contributed to medical education at all levels, including teaching advanced mental health skills to experienced GPs.

Mary has been involved in MHPN activities for about ten years at both local and national levels and is particularly passionate about interdisciplinary collaboration, and supporting rural and remote practitioners from all backgrounds who work in mental health and counselling related areas.