



BANT Guidelines: Eating Disorders & Mental Health

Hello there,

BANT recognises the need to provide NTs with professional practice guidance that enables BANT members to work safely with the broad range of health issues commonly encountered in clinic today.

Increased prevalence of eating disorders and mental health issues in our society over the last few years has meant that NTs are increasingly seeing clients with these conditions.

In order to enable NTs to work safely with clients with these health conditions, and detect the relevant signs and symptoms, BANT has updated [Eating Disorders](#) and [Mental Health](#) guidelines. We are thankful to our project teams of experienced practitioners who work with these specific health issues, for their time and dedication to supporting our profession and safe nutritional therapy practice.

Eating Disorders & Disordered Eating - Updated Guidelines

It is widely accepted that working with eating disorders and disordered eating is particularly challenging. The updated guidelines explain the complexities of disordered eating and eating disorders and how difficult it is to make the distinction between the two as both incorporate a range of symptoms which often overlap.

Adding to this complexity, clients with eating disorders or disordered eating often seek nutritional guidance for reasons other than their condition and may even try to mask it. As disordered eating is a significant risk factor for progression to an eating disorder, it is essential that the signs and symptoms are detected, assessed and appropriate support provided.

Nutritional therapy alone is not sufficient for those with a confirmed or suspected eating disorder, and it is easy to quickly move beyond the 'scope of practice' of an NT without additional training or sufficient experience. As such, the guidelines clarify why supporting these conditions requires additional post-graduation training. Indeed, additional training is a common requirement in the healthcare community for practitioners who work with specific health concerns such as this, where there is a need to work in collaboration with other healthcare professionals and/or a heightened risk of inadvertently doing harm.

BANT has therefore updated guidance to strongly recommend that only Registered Nutritional Therapy Practitioners (NTs) and BANT Registered Nutritionists® who have completed an appropriately recognised eating disorder training post-qualification should support individuals with confirmed or suspected eating disorder. Completing additional training will enable you to submit a light portfolio of evidence and be listed in **Health Concerns – Eating Disorders in BANT Practitioner Search**.

Review the new guidelines [here](#) and the application process [here](#); there is an option to meet the requirements through additional post-graduation training courses as well as an option for practitioners who are already experienced in working with clients with eating disorders and have gained this expertise over several years in practice.

We look forward to welcoming BANT members who are interested in embracing the additional training and effort to be recognised as nutrition professionals who support those who have a confirmed or suspected eating disorder.

Should you not wish to undertake further training, we do in any case strongly recommend that all NTs read the updated guidelines [here](#) and watch an updated two-part webinar series which provides a basic understanding of eating disorders and disordered eating and will help NTs detect common signs and symptoms. You can find the link to this webinar series within the guidelines.

Mental Health Guidelines

Mental Health is an extremely broad umbrella term which encompasses a vast array of disorders and, as an increasing number of people are dealing with mental health issues, an understanding of mental health and mental health conditions is deemed essential for all BANT members.

As with eating disorders, working with mental health conditions is particularly challenging and it is easy to quickly move beyond your scope of practice as a Registered Nutritional Therapy Practitioner (NT).

The guidelines help practitioners evaluate where their clients/prospective clients fall on the mental health spectrum and to recognise when a client falls outside of their scope of practice, requiring referral to another specialist health care practitioner.

Due to the huge range and varying degrees of severity of mental health conditions, it is likely that many clients will present with elements of compromised mental health. Therefore, the

issue isn't about avoiding working with clients with signs and symptoms of disordered mental or emotional health, but about understanding the severity of the issue, how this aligns with NT skills and determining when to refer on to a specialist health care practitioner.

Different types of mental health disorders are outlined and helpline details provided for anyone with red flag symptoms who may need immediate referral. Key considerations to ensure safe practice are also provided, including the importance of working within a multi-disciplinary team.

To further support practitioners, a new three-part webinar series "Introduction to Mental Health" is available in [BANT Learning Zone](#). We recommend that all NTs watch the series as part of their CPD. These webinars provide members with an overview of mental health disorders, nutrients and foundational pathways and how nutritional therapy may help clients with mental health conditions, along with red flags and some clinical techniques to consider. In the interest of client and practitioner safety, BANT's guidance is that NTs consider the two points below if working with client who has a current, diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health condition that falls outside their scope of practice:

1. NT has undertaken specific additional training to work in this field
2. NT does not work independently with a client who is high risk or exhibits red flag symptoms (see above)

To read the full Mental Health guidelines and to access the three-part webinar series, please follow the link [here](#).

Ongoing Support from the Practice Governance Team

Don't forget, as Members, you have 24/7 access to the BANT Professional Practice Handbook and the Professional Practice Panel (PPP) are available by email by writing to bantpractice@bant.org.uk for any queries you have.



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