

# De-mystifying ARFID: Basic 'how-to' skills online training for health professionals

## Authors:

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## Background:

Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) is a serious eating disorder that often starts in childhood and is associated with distress, malnutrition, and psychosocial difficulties. ARFID is characterised by sustained avoidance or restriction of food due to lack of interest in food, sensory sensitivities, or fear of aversive consequences of eating. These behaviours can lead to serious health problems in children and adolescents including nutrient deficiencies, reduced growth, high levels of anxiety and distress, family and social difficulties, and limited academic achievement. ARFID is a relatively new diagnosis, and for many clinicians, there are more questions than answers. The number of young people who meet criteria for ARFID is growing, and clinicians do not feel confident to identify and treat it effectively.

## Methods:

ARFID Fundamentals is a self-paced eLearning course designed to help health professionals gain the fundamental knowledge and skills to identify, assess, and treat ARFID. Learners completed pre- and post-training self-report surveys to evaluate course effectiveness in improving willingness, confidence, knowledge, and skills to treat ARFID.

## Results:

Since launching in 2024, 513 individuals have accessed the ARFID Fundamentals eLearning, and 231 health professionals have completed the course. Participant discipline mix was around 1/3 dietitians, 1/3 mental health clinicians and 1/3 other allied health workers, the majority working in a community setting, and around a quarter working in a hospital setting. Comparison of pre- and post-ratings showed improvements in self-reported knowledge, confidence, and skill in assessing and treating people with ARFID of large effect (*Cohens d* = >0.8), and minimal change in willingness due to high baseline ratings.

## Conclusion:

*ARFID Fundamentals* eLearning demonstrated strong engagement and effectiveness in improving clinicians' self-reported knowledge, confidence, and skills in identifying and treating ARFID. Continued education and support are essential to build clinician confidence and ensure timely, effective care for individuals affected by ARFID.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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