

Presenter: We have exclusive details of a revolutionary treatment for anorexia being trialled here. The eating disorder kills more patients than any other mental illness. But just a few years ago, a sector here which was so underresourced, sufferers were sent overseas for help. Kim Vinnell explains the new approach.

Vinnell: Today, Megan Halligan is the picture of health but just four years ago she weighed little more than 30 kilograms in the depths of anorexia. She says the latest eating disorder research which uses audio therapy to help reduce anxiety while eating could have been helpful.

Megan: I definitely think it would have been quite a good concept I mean it's obviously not enough but it's a good stepping start.

Vinnell: The world's first trial has young anorexic patients listening to devised short audio tracks before, during and after every meal.

Remember why you want to recover.

Vinnell: Auckland researchers hope the year-long trial will help patients understand feeling hungry or full aided by relevant technology.

Sarah Stanley: We just wanted to if it would be out of place they were at school or at uni(versity) or while they were at the restaurant.

Vinnell: Across town another trial is getting underway, this one for bulimic patients who must check in with their therapists with a text to stop the high rate of relapse.

Jan Geary: Those will head onto the server and we will respond to these texts on a personal based on the reported symptoms.

Vinnell: A scathing report in 2007 prompted the government to pump NZ\$26 Million into the sector over four years.

That report found eating disorders services at the time were severely lacking with huge waiting lists for outpatient treatment systems like this one here in Greenlane and unsustainable demand support for the ones that care for acute patients in Christchurch.

The failing system Megan Halligan had firsthand experience of, but one it's hoped is now underway to recovery.