

Breakout Session One**ILLINOIS ROOM**

10:15-11:15 AM

Breaking the Silence: Eating Disorders in Midlife***SPEAKER: Laura Briz, MD, Psychiatrist*****Description:**

Eating disorders in midlife are increasingly recognized as a significant health concern, affecting all genders. Key contributing factors include hormonal changes during perimenopause, evolving nutritional needs, and psychosocial stressors such as role transitions and life changes. Midlife individuals may also experience heightened body dissatisfaction due to age-related physical changes, compounded by cultural pressures around youth and appearance. Men in midlife face unique challenges, including underdiagnosis and stigma. Effective treatment requires age-appropriate, gender-inclusive, and trauma-informed approaches. Raising awareness, improving early detection, and promoting tailored interventions are critical for addressing the complex and often overlooked needs of this population.

Objectives:

1. Explain the impact of perimenopause and hormonal fluctuations on mood, appetite regulation and body image.
2. Discuss role transitions and psychosocial stressors that contribute to eating disorders during this period of life.
3. Identify the nutritional needs across the life span.

Speaker Bio:

Dr. Laura Villavicencio Briz is a psychiatrist practicing in ERC Pathlight's Downtown Chicago location, where she provides comprehensive mental health care to a diverse patient population. She completed her Adult Psychiatry Residency at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) College of Medicine, where she also earned her Doctor of Medicine. Prior to her medical studies, Dr. Villavicencio Briz pursued a Master of Science in Medical Sciences with a focus on Anatomy from the University of South Florida and dual Bachelor's degrees in Economics and Biology from the University of Florida. Her multidisciplinary background informs her holistic approach to mental health, integrating insights from social determinants of health with evidence-based psychiatric care.

During her residency, Dr. Villavicencio Briz held the distinguished APA SAMHSA Minority Fellowship, supporting her focus on underserved populations and contributing to her expertise in women's mental health through a fellowship in this specialized area. Actively involved in academic psychiatry, she participated in the Clinician Educator Track, further enhancing her skills in patient-centered education and collaborative care. Her research and presentations reflect a commitment to addressing complex psychiatric cases, including her work on immigrant mental health and the nuanced treatment of intellectually disabled patients.

In addition to her clinical and research contributions, Dr. Villavicencio Briz is a member of various professional societies, including the American Psychiatric Association (APA), where she served on the Ethics Committee, and the Illinois Psychiatric Society. A native Spanish speaker, she provides culturally sensitive care to her patients and is an advocate for accessible mental health services. Outside of work, she enjoys practicing yoga, baking, and gardening, balancing her professional life with personal passions that contribute to her well-rounded approach to wellness.