Guelph Wellington Ontario Health Team

# Beyond "Treatment Resistance": A Biosocial Reframing of Complex Clinical Presentations

Care providers across disciplines encounter patients whose distress does not fit neatly into standard diagnostic or treatment pathways and who are often described as "treatment resistant," disengaged, or difficult to help. This interactive session uses a detailed case example and an adapted biosocial framework to explore how biological vulnerability and invalidating environments—across development and healthcare systems—can shape chronic risk and impede engagement. Participants will examine how validation, dialectical thinking, and system-aware treatment adaptations can restore safety, trust, and therapeutic momentum across a range of complex presentations.

Participants will be able to:

- Apply an adapted biosocial framework to understand complex presentations that do not respond to standard care models.
- Identify how invalidation can operate developmentally and systemically, including within medical and psychiatric settings.
- Use validation and dialectical strategies to signal safety and reduce threat in high-risk clinical interactions.
- Consider ethical and clinical implications of labeling patients as "treatment resistant," "severe," or "beyond help."

**Monday, February 23, 2026**
**10:30-12:00 - Virtual**

Dr. Anita Federici, PhD, C.Psych, FAED, is a Clinical Psychologist and Founder of The Centre for Psychology and Emotion Regulation, internationally recognized for her work in eating disorders, personality disorders, and trauma. She is a leading trainer, researcher, and systems consultant, known for translating evidence into scalable, person-centred care. Dr. Federici serves as Adjunct Faculty at York University and as an Expert Clinical Educator for the Provincial Eating Disorders Training Program. She has delivered hundreds of invited presentations across academic, hospital, and community settings and is the co-author of Treating Eating Disorders with DBT: The MED-DBT Protocol (Guilford Press, 2026).