Is the relationship between anorexia nervosa and obsessive compulsive pathology dependent on the content of obsessions and compulsions?

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Overview

• Study background and rationale
• Method
  - participants
  - materials
  - data analysis
• Results
• Conclusion
Background

- Obsessions and compulsions surrounding eating, exercise and the body well characterised in anorexia nervosa (AN).

- Parallels between AN and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) disorder have been drawn for quite some time (Bastiani et al., 1996).

  -two disorders suggested to share an underlying pathology

  (Steinglass & Walsh, 2006).
Background

• Anorexia nervosa (AN) and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) are highly co-morbid (Kaye et al., 2004).

• Rates of OCD within samples of AN individuals reported to be much higher than within the general population (Lewin, Menzel & Strober, 2013).
However...

• Direct comparison between those with AN and healthy individuals (HC) made infrequently.

- OCD diagnosis and obsession and compulsion presence have been compared in AN and HC groups.
- Differences in obsession and compulsion severity have not been investigated.
The present study

Research question:

Is the severity of obsessions and compulsions greater in individuals with AN compared to HC?
Method

Secondary data analysis

Participants 32 AN patients, and 34 healthy volunteer women. Participants and healthy controls were age-matched, and ages ranged from 14 to 27.

Measures The Obsession and Compulsion severity subscales of the Child Obsessive Compulsive Inventory Revised (Shafran et al., 2003).
Method

Data Analysis Two-way ANOVA

- Investigated effects of diagnostic status, symptom content and their interaction on obsession and compulsion severity.

- To inform whether all obsessions and compulsions of AN individuals are more severe than those of HC, or whether only those relating to eating, exercise and the body are more severe in AN.
Results: Obsession severity

HC=4.45
AN=12.30

$F(1, 59)=5.70, p=.02$
Results: Obsession severity

Other=6.86
AN=13.87

\( F(1, 59)=1.58, \ p=.19 \)
Results: Obsession severity

Eating, exercise & body-related=$14.29$ (AN, $n=19$) vs $8.00$ (HC, $n=1$)

Other=$10.84$ (AN, $n=14$) vs $4.33$ (HC, $n=30$)

$F(1, 59)=0.02, p=.967$
Results: Compulsion severity

HC=4.06
AN=13.90

$F(1, 59)=27.89, p<.0005$
Results: Compulsion severity

Other = 4.91
AN = 13.89

$F(1, 59) = 9.45, p = .003$
Results: Compulsion severity

Eating, exercise & body-related = 15.70 (AN, n=23) vs 5.60 (HC, n=5)

Other = 8.75 (AN, n=8) vs 3.78 (HC, n=27)

$F(1, 59) = 3.225, \ p = .078$
Conclusions

• Cannot rule out that individuals with AN have more severe obsessions and compulsions generally.

• Further study is required.
Limitations

• Small sample size.

• Causal inferences cannot be drawn.

• Inability to separate severity scores for eating, exercise and body-related symptoms from those for other types of symptom.
Thank you
Questions

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