

EATING DISORDERS: HORMONAL ALTERATIONS AND PSYCHOPATOLOGICAL FEATURES

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Objective: To demonstrate the complex correlation existing in patients with eating disorders between hormonal alterations and psychopathological symptomatology, that has been little studied until now.

Methods: 60 women aged between 16 and 35 years and diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa according to the DSM-IV were assessed using the SCL-90-R, EDI, BAT and DES II. A blood sample was taken from each patient in the morning, on the seventh day of the menstrual cycle or on the corresponding day from the women with amenorrhea; the following hormone levels were measured: TSH, FT3, FT4, LH, FSH, 17-beta-estradiol, cortisol, DHEAS. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient has been used to test the correlation between hormonal level and test scores.

Results: Positive correlations exist between BMI and FT3 and LH, which decrease when BMI decreases. We can observe positively significant correlations between LH and FSH levels and the BAT scale scores. No one significant correlation was found between hormonal levels and dissociative symptoms as measured by DES. With regard to EDI, the following psychopathological features correlate with hormonal assessment: the wish to be thin, body dissatisfaction and perfectionism.

Conclusions: Our findings suggest a significant correlation between psychopathological features we considered and hormonal readings, especially LH, FSH, TSH, FT3. When these hormonal readings decrease, the patients' self-ratings and their body dissatisfaction decrease. That attributes a protective meaning to the dietary symptom akin to an effective measure that relieves the person's feelings of inadequacy.