Prevalence of Orthorexia in Diabetic Patients

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Objectives:

- Orthorexia nervosa (ON) is an eating disorder, characterized by an obsession with avoiding foods perceived to be unhealthy (1).
- Though it has not been recognized as a pathological entity in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders –IV yet, interest in the condition and its prevalence have been increasing recently (1, 2).
- ON has been studied in various populations in Turkey; however, no study carried out in cases with Diabetes Mellitus (DM) was noticed (3-6).
- This study aimed to determine the prevalence and risk factors of orthorexia in a group of patients with DM.

Methods:

- 134 (63 female) DM patients who admitted to the outpatient clinic of Department of Endocrinology of Baskent University were enrolled.
- Demographic information, educational status, diabetic history, care, and treatment, height, and weight of all cases were recorded.
- Ortho-15 Questionnaire was applied to all participants. Each patient can score minimum 15, maximum 60 points from this test. Those scoring 40 points and less are accepted to be orthorectic (1).

| Table 1. The distribution of frequency of orthorexia nervosa according to sex and educational status* |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Sex                                             | Orthorexia Nervosa | Present | Absent |
| Female                                         | Number | %    | Number | %    |
| Male                                           | Number | %    | Number | %    |
| Educational status                             | Total |
| Primary                                        | 63 / 100% |
| Highschool                                     | 71 / 100% |
| University                                    | 71 / 100% |
| Post-graduate                                  | 71 / 100% |

* P > 0.05

Results:

- The mean age of the group was 59.9 ± 11.7 years.
- The Ortho-15 test revealed that the mean SD test score of the whole group was 35.4 ± 4.2 points; the minimum score being 25, and the maximum 46 points.
- The frequency of ON in the study group was 13.4% (18/134 cases).
- ON displayed similar frequency in both sexes and educational status did not affect its occurrence.
- No relation was determined between BMI and presence of orthorexia (p > 0.05).
- The mean duration of diabetes of the whole group was 10.1 ± 8.8 years and there was no relation between duration of diabetes and presence of ON.

Conclusions:

- Like other eating disorders, orthorexia nervosa might lead to serious consequences in diabetic disorders.
- This study, probably the first performed in cases with Diabetes Mellitus, revealed that orthorexia nervosa was not frequent in this group of patients.
- Performing the test on larger groups making comparisons with non-diabetic controls may introduce different results.

References: