

Prevalence of eating disorder symptomatology among hospital outpatients referred to health promotion

Rationale In somatic hospital departments we experience bad compliance towards lifestyle changes and weight loss interventions among some outpatients having higher BMI and therefore patients may be treated incorrectly or undertreated. In this cross-sectional study we aimed to investigate the prevalence of eating disorders among patients referred to lifestyle intervention courses.

Methods This study was conducted as a cross-sectional study based on patient reported questionnaires. All patients following the lifestyle course at the Department of Health Promotion at Aalborg University Hospital were invited to participate. Data included demography. We used the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q) and EQ-5D-5L among other questionnaires regarding eating disorder symptomatology. STATA was used for statistical analysis. Linear regression adjusted for sex, age, and BMI was used to compare means of two groups.

Results In this study 136 patients responded to the questionnaire and the response rate was 69.4%. Using EDE-Q 17.7% had a self-reporting eating disorder or sub-clinical symptoms (ED+). Of these 11.0% lived up to the diagnostic criteria for self-reporting eating disorder classified as binge eating disorder (7.4%) and bulimia/atypical bulimia (3.7%). We found that ED+ had greater grazing behavior than those without an eating disorder ($p < 0.001$) and that there was a significant difference in quality of life (QoL) when comparing the two ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions The prevalence of ED+ referred to a lifestyle course is substantial and associated with poor QoL. Therefore, the prevalence of eating disorders among outpatients underlines the importance of further research into the prevalence of eating disorders within these settings.