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Alexithymia and its relationships with anxiety and depression in eating disorders

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Abstract

The objective was to study alexithymia and its relationship with anxiety and depression in eating disorders (ED) in a Spanish sample. One hundred and fifty-one females with an eating disorder: 25 with anorexia nervosa, restricting subtype (ANR), 44 with anorexia nervosa, bulimic subtype (ANB), and 82 with bulimia nervosa (BN) [according to criteria from DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)], and a control group of 43 females, were assessed with the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS). Patients with ED present higher rates of alexithymia than controls, but after controlling for anxiety and depression the differences among groups disappear. Depression and anxiety predicted and correlated positively with alexithymia. Our findings are consistent with previous studies, and suggest that alexithymia is closely related to anxiety and depression, and could be a trait or a state in patients with ED.



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Keywords

Alexithymia; Eating disorders; Anxiety; Depression; TAS-20

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