

Approach Bias Modification Training in Bulimia Nervosa: A Randomized Controlled Trial

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Authors

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Aim

This study aims at examining whether a brief, computerized cognitive bias modification (CBM) training can reduce binge eating episodes and global bulimia nervosa (BN) symptomatology in BN patients. Additionally, we will investigate whether this CBM program reduces trait and cue-elicited food craving and the approach bias towards visual food stimuli. Finally, we will assess treatment acceptance.

Background

BN patients show uncontrollable approach tendencies towards binge food despite massively negative consequences. Such cognitive biases occur at early stages of information processing and might be best addressed by specific CBM training. In a feasibility trial with people with high levels of food craving and sub-threshold BN symptoms, we found that 10 sessions of approach bias modification training reduced approach and attentional biases towards food cues, trait and cue-elicited food craving, and BN symptoms.

Method

The study involves a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial with two parallel arms. A total of 54 BN patients will be recruited for the trial. Approach bias towards food stimuli will be retrained by a computerized Approach-Avoidance Task adopting an implicit learning paradigm. Patients in the control condition (SHAM) will receive the same dosage but will not be trained to avoid food cues. Patients will be assessed at three time points (pre-, post intervention, and at 3-months follow-up).

Execution

September 2015 - August 2017

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