

How does food taste in anorexia and bulimia nervosa?

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Authors

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Aim

The goal is to systematically investigate the gustatory perception and hedonics of taste in patients with anorexia nervosa (AN) and bulimia nervosa (BN). We will examine whether aversions to the taste of high-calorie food is related to the suppression of energy intake in restricting-type AN, and whether an increased hedonic valence of sweet, caloric-dense foods may be part of the mechanisms triggering binge-eating episodes in BN. We will also examine the role of cognitions influencing these mechanisms.

Background

Despite efforts to understand dysregulated energy intake, olfactory-gustatory deficits and food preferences in eating disorders, the mechanisms pertaining the perception of and responses to food properties in AN and BN remain largely unknown; both during the course of illness and compared to healthy populations.

Method

Four mixtures of sweet-fat stimuli will be presented in a sensory two-alternative forced-choice test involving signal detection analysis (study 1), and a full-scale taste reactivity test including psychophysiological and behavioural measures to assess subtle and covert hedonic changes (study 2). In particular, currently-ill AN and BN will be compared to recovered AN and BN patients, and to healthy normal-weight and underweight controls without any eating disorder pathology.

Execution

November 2016 - October 2018

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