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Anorexia Nervosa

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1. What is Anorexia Nervosa (AN) ?

Anorexia Nervosa is a psychological and potentially life-threatening eating disorder. It is estimated to occur ten times more commonly among women than men. Especially among high socioeconomic status people in developed countries, it often occurs in women aged between 10 to 30, and the average age of onset is 17 years old. However, cases are occasionally found in males or school-age children.

There are two common types of AN, which are as follows:

Binge eating/Purging Type – The person struggling with this type of eating disorder will often purge after eating. Have behavior may purge by exercising excessively, vomiting, or abusing laxatives.

Restricting Type – The individual suffering from restrictive anorexia is often perceived as highly self-disciplined. They restrict the quantity of food, calories and often high-fat or high-sugar foods.

2. Causes of AN

No single cause has been identified for AN. It probably happens as a result of biological, environmental, and psychological factors.

The following risk factors have been associated with it:

- (1) **Physiological factors:** the imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain, excessive serotonin will lead to loss of appetite and weight loss.
- (2) **Genetic factors:** people with a family history tend to have higher incidence than others.
- (3) **Personality factors:** anorexia is often combined with anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive thoughts, or pursuit of perfectionism.
- (4) **Social and cultural factors:** it is related to the cultural standard at that time.
- (5) **Family factors:** anorexic patients are often vulnerable, stubborn and overprotected characters, and such families are also weak in conflict resolution.

3. Signs and symptoms

Those suffering from this eating disorder are typically suffering from an extremely low body weight relative to their height and body type. In a vicious cycle of self-starvation, the body is denied the essential nutrients it needs to function normally. Thus, the body is forced to slow down all of its processes to conserve energy, resulting in serious medical consequences. An individual suffering from anorexia nervosa may reveal one or several signs and symptoms such as: Electrolyte imbalance, anemia, amenorrhea, paleness and weakness, constipation, low blood pressure, slow heart rate, and even osteoporosis, etc.

4. Treatment

Treatment can involve medication, psychotherapy, family therapy, and nutrition counseling. A comprehensive plan must be tailored to meet the individual's needs. Hospitalization may be needed if there is severe weight loss or malnutrition, a persistent refusal to eat, or a psychiatric emergency.

5. Care Plan

The sufferers often do not seek help – they may go to great lengths to hide their behavior from family and friends, and sometimes might not realize that they're ill. If you suspect that you or someone you know has anorexia nervosa you should be kind and respectful rather than judgmental. Help them to look into providers of treatment to find who can best help immediately.

6. Conclusion

The prodromal symptoms of this disease are easily overlooked in daily life due to the values of the general public, and even the patients themselves are quite difficult to detect and lack the sense of disease. Important, and most of the patients prone to this disease are easily shaken at the psychological level and lack confidence in

themselves. The listening and support of others are relatively important in the treatment process.

7. Reference

蘇筱媛、蔡淑敏 (2020) · 節制型與清除型神經性厭食症個案報告 · 臺灣營養學會雜誌，44(3)，92-100。

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Let us take the quiz to make sure you understand.

1. Those suffering from this eating disorder are typically suffering from an extremely low body weight relative to their height and body type. In a vicious cycle of self-starvation, the body is denied the essential nutrients it needs to function normally.

Yes No Don't know

2. The sufferers often do not seek help – they may go to great lengths to hide their behavior from family and friends, and sometimes might not realize that they're ill.

Yes No Don't know

3. Anorexia Nervosa is a psychological and potentially life-threatening eating disorder. It is estimated to occur ten times more commonly among men than women.

Yes No Don't know

4. AN treatment can involve medication, psychotherapy, family therapy, and nutrition counseling. A comprehensive plan must be tailored to meet the individual's needs.

Yes No Don't know

5. Anorexia is often combined with anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive thoughts, or pursuit of perfectionism.

Yes No Don't know