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Exercise dependence and quality of life: Sense-making among individuals with eating disorders – an ongoing study.

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Pathological mechanisms of compulsive exercise according to the Compulsive Exercise Test

The Compulsive Exercise Test has been developed as a reliable multidimensional model of compulsive exercise. The areas measured in the Compulsive Exercise Test are: 4, 5, 6, 7, 21, 22.

- Avoidance and rule-driven behaviour
- Weight control exercise
- Mood improvement
- Lack of exercise enjoyment
- Exercise rigidity

However, this model does not explain the impact of compulsive exercise on individuals who have eating disorders.

Visual representation of a compulsive exercise model

Table 1: A schematic representation of the maintenance model of compulsive exercise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of questions that may be asked</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much exercise would you normally undertake in a day/week?</td>
<td>Do you enjoy exercise?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been injured as a result of exercise?</td>
<td>If you missed an exercise session, how did it make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever continued to engage in exercise even when injured?</td>
<td>How did exercise make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you give yourself rest days?</td>
<td>Why did/do you engage in exercise?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you often feel physically fatigued?</td>
<td>Did you do exercise around with others or alone?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did exercise ever stop you from doing something important?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did exercise ever stop you from doing activities with friends/family?</td>
<td>Did you ever feel like you needed to increase/decrease the amount of exercise you did? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you ever have to plan your days around exercise?</td>
<td>Did you ever feel like you were not in control of the exercise that you did?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did exercise ever stop you from doing something important?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

Compulsive exercise is a significant issue in eating disorders, however, at present it is not accurately defined within the DSM and has limited research into the understanding of how it affects people who suffer from an eating disorder.

This research aims to collect in-depth data around how compulsive exercise affects quality of life to help add to the understanding, and therefore eventually more effective treatment, of compulsive exercise in eating disorders.

REFERENCES: