

P-547 - IS FAMILY THERAPY THE MOST EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH ANOREXIA NERVOSA?

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Introduction: Anorexia nervosa is a mental health disorder characterised by deliberate weight loss (through restrictive eating, excessive exercise and/or purging), disordered body image, and intrusive overvalued fears of gaining weight. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence recommends that family interventions that directly address the eating disorder should be offered to children and adolescents with anorexia nervosa.

Aims: To perform a literature review to assess whether family therapy is a more effective intervention than other treatments in the management of adolescents with anorexia nervosa.

Method: Search of PubMed, The Cochrane Library and NHS Evidence for randomised controlled trials that compared a family intervention with another treatment for anorexia nervosa in adolescence.

Results and discussion: This literature search revealed only six randomised controlled trials investigating the use of family therapy in the treatment of adolescents with anorexia nervosa, and these all had small sample sizes. Some, but not all, of these trials suggest that family therapy may be advantageous over individual psychotherapy in terms of physical improvement (weight gain and resumption of menstruation) and reduction of cognitive distortions, particularly in younger patients. Due to the small sample sizes and the significant risk of bias (particularly information bias) in some of the studies the evidence in favour of family therapy over individual therapy is weak. In the future, larger randomised controlled trials with long term follow-up are required to assess whether family therapy is the most effective treatment for anorexia nervosa in adolescence.