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BARIATRIC SURGERY IS ASSOCIATED WITH REDUCED PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND IMPROVED SEXUAL FUNCTION IN OBESE FEMALE PATIENTS

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Introduction: Obesity is a serious health issue, associated with significant medical and psychosocial co-morbidity. Bariatric surgery is a promising treatment modality however, few studies have so far investigated its impact on patients' sexuality.

Aims: The present study's aim was to determine bariatric surgery's effect on female patients' Body Mass Index (BMI), psychological and sexual functioning.

Methods: 59 obese female patients, scheduled to undergo weight loss operation, completed the study. Psychological functioning was measured by the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), while sexual functioning was assessed by the Female Sexual Functioning Index (FSFI). All participants were evaluated in two consecutive time intervals, one week before surgery (T1) and one year after (T2).

Results: Statistical analysis revealed a significant reduction in BMI ($p < 0.001$) and depression ($p < 0.001$) scores, a significant improvement in sexual desire ($p = 0.005$), arousal ($p = 0.001$), lubrication ($p = 0.003$), satisfaction ($p = 0.012$) and total sexual function ($p = 0.003$) and a decrease in the levels of pain during intercourse ($p = 0.014$) postoperatively.

Postoperative total sexual functioning was correlated with baseline BMI ($p = 0.030$) and BMI decrease ($p = 0.037$).

Conclusions: Bariatric surgery appears as an effective way to control weight and improve psychological and sexual functioning in female obese patients. Patients, who ceased to be obese postoperatively, reported the greatest level of sexual improvement, indicating that obesity treatment should focus on BMI normalization.