Richard Morton: treatment of anorexia nervosa in a male

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Richard Morton, an English physician, writing in 1689, is usually credited with the first description of anorexia nervosa. The opening chapter of A Treatise of Consumptions is entitled "Of a Nervous Consumption": Morton provides two case histories, one female; the other, male.¹

The Son of the Reverend Minister Mr. Steele, my very good Friend, about the Sixteenth Year of his Age fell gradually into a total want of Appetite, occasioned by his studying too hard, and the Passions of his Mind, and upon that into an Universal Atrophy, pining away more and more for the space of two Years, without any Cough, Fever, or any other Symptom of any Distemper of his Lungs, or any other Enfeebly, as also without a Looseness, or any other sign of a Colliquation, or Preternatural Evacuation. And therefore I judg’d him to abandon his Studies, to go into the Country Air, and to use Riding, and a Milk Diet (and especially to drink Asses Milk) for a long time. By the use of which he recover’d His Health in a great measure, though he is not yet perfectly freed from a Consumptive state; and what will be the event of this other? Depress Anxiety 2012; 29: 1043–9.