

To what extent does the COVID-19 pandemic impact patients with anorexia nervosa?

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Aims. This systematic review aims to discuss the extent to which the measures undertaken to control the COVID-19 pandemic in several countries have affected those with Anorexia Nervosa (AN). The coronavirus pandemic is still raging on in many countries and its effects will still be felt years from now and previous studies have shown that it has impacted other mental illnesses. AN cases are on the rise and the nature of the illness has deadly consequences, therefore it is paramount to discuss the relationship between the COVID-19 measures and symptomatology of AN to ensure appropriate services are in place to deal with potential outcomes.

Method. Systematic search of the PubMed database gave thirty-three total results with seven of these used in this review. These studies met the inclusion criteria; examples include primary studies and use of the English Language. The exclusion criteria involved literature reviews, studies with less than ten participants and studies not separating AN from other eating disorders.

Result. Many studies were cross sectional in nature except two longitudinal studies. Anorexic symptomatology increased in the majority of papers in this review. Specifically restricting intake has increased compared to before lockdown measures. Physical activity has varied on an individual level in most studies potentially due to compensatory behaviours. Co-morbid psychopathologies were also noted during these studies. There are many factors behind these changes such as food insecurity, the effect of media and social media, uncertainty and the lack of social interaction. A number of participants across the studies were dissatisfied with treatment services during lockdowns. Variability in study results may be due to the differences in measures between countries and the use of self-reported cases compared to those contacted through care services. Limitations of this review are largely due to the how current the topic is and recommendations for the future include reviewing new studies that are published and to review the situation once the full impact of COVID-19 is known.

Conclusion. Patients with AN have struggled more due to the COVID-19 measures and the true effect of the pandemic is yet to be felt. Further studies and reviews should be conducted. The appropriate services should be put into place to ensure patients are supported effectively.

Are drug consumption facilities an effective intervention to reduce drug related mortality? A critical review of the literature

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Aims. To critically appraise the literature regarding the effect of Drug Consumption Facilities in reducing overdose mortality

Drug consumption facilities (DCF) are places where people can use illicit drugs in the presence of medically trained staff, they aim to reduce fatal overdose risk, reduce risky injecting practices, and to serve as a bridge for users into mainstream treatment, healthcare and social services. Increasing numbers of fatal overdoses due to illicit drug use are a significant public health concern. The UK's statutory independent advisory body (the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs) has recommended DCFs as a mechanism to reduce fatal overdoses due to illicit drugs. However, current UK legislation prohibits their provision.

Method. Systematic extraction of relevant literature from PubMed, using a search string with a focus on observational cohort studies with fatal overdose as the outcome. Appraisal of identified papers using the CASP tool

Result. 184 papers were identified, two of these met the inclusion criteria. Quality was fair/good. Neither demonstrated a clear effect of DCFs in reducing overdose mortality

Conclusion. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions due to design weaknesses and potential confounding variables. Robust design is difficult in this research area, due to lack of suitability for RCTs. Despite the lack of a clear effect on overdose mortality, DCFs may exert other positive effects and are a pragmatic and humane response to reducing risk in this target population

Prognostic evaluation of suicidality and development of risk factors in victims of physical and emotional child abuse and emotional/psychological neglect

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Aims. To evaluate the effects of childhood maltreatment, specifically physical and emotional abuse and emotional/psychological neglect on the development of suicidal ideation, depressive symptoms and self-harm. It is hypothesised that there will be a strong causal link between the aforementioned types of maltreatment with suicidality, depression and self-harm.

Background. Child abuse is a major public health issue with profound developmental and mental health consequences towards victims and their contributions to society as a whole. The impact of sexual abuse is well-established, however non-sexual child maltreatment and its sequelae are not as well understood or studied.

Method. A literature search was carried out using the Pubmed, Cochrane, Scopus and Google Scholar databases. Articles were appraised according to set criteria and manually screened for relevance to the review.

Result. The results of this review demonstrate that there are statistically significant, potentially causal links between emotional and physical abuse, and emotional/psychological neglect with suicidal ideation, depressive symptoms and self-harm. More research is still required to elucidate the role of polyvictimisation in mental health outcomes and to further confirm these links between abuse and development.

Conclusion. Child maltreatment remains a large public health issue with major impact on the economy of the world. It has profound, potentially lifelong consequences on victims and is something that needs to lose its stigma so that it can be identified earlier and potential damage prevented as far as possible. The future may lie in working to remove the stigma surrounding it, standardise how it is studied and thus learn to recognise the signs earlier – ideally leading to implementation of policy to get victims to safety, preventing unnecessary harm.

How effective is clinical simulation in improving medical students' confidence when interviewing patients with mental health problems?: a comparison of pre-COVID and post-COVID medical student experiences

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