
SHOULD RAMADAN BE PRESCRIBED AFTER CHRISTMAS? BIPOLAR DISORDER, OBESITY IN THE HEALTHCARE PROFESSION AND THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF FASTING

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Introduction:

In the UK, 1/4 people are considered overweight or obese. National Health Service (NHS) employees are no exception with ½ workers affected. There are myriad factors that contribute to these statistics such as mental health, occupation and lifestyle.

Studies reveal that 35% of people with bipolar disorder are clinically obese, which is the highest percentage of any psychiatric illness. The suggested factors that may be contributing to this problem include co-existing eating disorders and treatment with medications that cause weight gain.

Religious periods i.e. Christmas and Ramadan are associated with weight changes. 50 % of annual weight gain has been reported during the Christmas period. Conversely weight loss has been reported in Muslims who fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

Objective:

To qualitatively illustrate how religious, psychosocial, physical and occupational factors can cause significant weight changes.

Method:

We provide an autobiographical narrative from a doctor- the primary author- employed by the National Health Service who suffers from bipolar disorder and who has experienced dramatic oscillations in his weight.

Results:

Ramadan provided the primary author with a platform to make major modifications to his lifestyle. He substantially reduced his carbohydrate consumption and also exercised 7 days/week. Dr Hankir lost 30 kg in weight over a 3 month period. His waist size decreased from 36 inches to 32 inches.

Conclusions:

Fasting during Ramadan can provide an opportunity to lose weight as is evidenced in this case report, however structured and consistent lifestyle modifications are necessary to maintain sustained weight loss.