
WEIGHT CYCLING AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN BIPOLAR DISORDER

F. Fellendorf¹, N. Lackner¹, S. Bengesser¹, A. Birner¹, M. Platzer¹, K. Filic¹, R. Queissner¹, S. Wallner-Liebmann², H.P. Kapfhammer¹, E.Z. Reininghaus¹

¹Psychiatry, Medical University of Graz, Graz, Austria ; ²Pathophysiology and Immunology, Medical University of Graz, Graz, Austria

Introduction: Overweight and weight cycling represent common problems in individuals with bipolar disorder. Furthermore, substance dependency including alcoholism has been found to be a frequent co-morbid disorder, which affects the course and prognosis of bipolar disorder. Recently, substance use disorders have been related to weight cycling in a non-bipolar sample (Whyshak, 2006).

Objectives: The study aimed to investigate the association between weight cycling (loosing and regaining weight in the last four years for at least three times) and substance abuse (drug and alcohol abuse) in patients with bipolar disorder.

Methods: The study took place at the Department of Psychiatry of the Medical University of Graz, Austria and 90 euthymic patients with bipolar disorder were included. Questionnaire data about weight and weight cycling were collected. A 'SCID-I' was conducted to evaluate bipolar symptomatology and co-morbid disorders.

Results: Findings showed that bipolar patients with a history of weight cycling are prone to demonstrate a comorbid alcohol use disorder compared to non-weight cyclers ($F_{1,87}=5,531$; $p < .05$). However, we could not find a significant relation between weight cycling and other drug or polydrug abuse in our bipolar sample ($F_{1,87}=1,548$; $p > .05$).

Conclusions: Although, a relation between weight cycling and the co-morbidity of alcohol dependency has been detected, we do not know which phenomenon causes the other. Further studies on this topic including investigation of the relationship between alcohol abuse, weight cycling, and therapy outcome would be important. To conclude, the therapy of bipolar disorder should aim for a stable weight.