Abstract

Introduction: Human eating behaviour is regulated by multiple factors. Anorexia nervosa patients show a restrictive eating pattern while bulimia nervosa patients present bingeing-purging episodes. Although treatments are specially successful in the normalization of body composition, maladaptive eating behaviours tend to persist being a risk factor for relapse and recurrence.

Objectives: The aim of this work was to assess the quality of the nutritional choice of eating disorders patients after a year of nutritional education and to assess improvements in choice capacity.

Methods: Thirty-one outpatients of an eating disorders unit planned a menu after body composition normalization and repeated this plan each three months during a one-year programme of nutritional education.

Results: Patients improved the time spent on the assignment (p < 0.01), Body Mass Index (p < 0.01), their body fat mass (p < 0.01) and the content of energy (p < 0.05), carbohydrates (p < 0.01) and polyunsaturated fatty acids (p < 0.05) in their chosen menus. No differences were found on proteins, total fat or fat profile, vitamins or minerals. 12.9% and 3.2% of the patients chose their menu according to the recommendations of caloric and lipid profile, respectively, after a year of nutritional education.

Discussion: Although patients improved energy and carbohydrates content of the menus they tended to reduce caloric and fat food choices, which could lead to relapse and recurrence. Specific nutritional education programmes along with the mandatory psychological and psychiatric treatment may be effective.

Conclusions: One year of nutritional education combined with psychological and psychiatric treatment improved those factors usually involved in relapse and recurrence, thus contributing to a proper outcome.

Keywords

Key words, Diet choice, Eating disorders, Treatment outcome, Body mass index, Relapse.