Abstract

Introduction: The pathophysiologic mechanisms that account for the development and persistence of anorexia nervosa (AN) remain unclear. With respect to the neuropsychological functioning, the executive functions have been reported to be altered, especially cognitive flexibility and decision-making processes. Objectives: The aim of this study was to review the current state of the neuropsychological studies focused on anorexia nervosa, especially those highlighting the executive functions. Methods: This was done by means of a searching process covering three relevant electronic databases, as well as an additional search on references included in the analysed papers. Eventually we have to mention other published reviews and a hand-search. Results and discussion: Comparing AN patients and healthy controls the results remain controversial and so remains the comparison of different eating disorders with respect to the neuropsychological dysfunction. The role of variables such as depression, anxiety and obsessionality needs to be clarified. There seems to be some base to state that some commonalities exist in the so-called extreme weight conditions (anorexia, obesity). The link between neuropsychological dysfunction in AN and biomarkers remains unclear. The role of neuropsychological deficits in AN, as initial factors or simply as mere consequences, remains unclear too. The link between the body image disturbances and the neuropsychological dysfunction needs to be clarified. The similarities between the AN neuropsychological dysfunction and that found in other mental disorders may be considered up to date as a mere approach. The same applies to the relationship between the AN patients’ neuropsychological performance and personality or gender. (Nutr Hosp. 2014;29:500-507) DOI:10.3305/NH.2014.29.3.7149

Keywords