Abstract

Introduction: The complexity of factors involved in anorexia nervosa (AN) and the recommendations of prominent health organizations underscore the importance of reflecting on therapeutic interventions aimed at patients’ family members. Objective: To expand knowledge about the mother-daughter relationship in AN, with a focus on developing a conceptual framework that is able to improve the treatment of the disorder, reduce factors that perpetuate it and improve prognosis. Method: A clinical method, anchored by psychodynamic references, was employed in a group of family members of patients with eating disorders. The group met weekly, and sessions were led by psychologists from the eating disorder outpatient clinic of a university hospital. Results and Discussion: Common characteristics in the mother-daughter relationship in cases of AN were identified. The issue of mutual control, the dialectic between omnipotence and impotence, and the relationship of devotion, passion and annihilation between mothers and daughters are phenomena that form the basis of AN, with a direct influence on the severity of each case and on treatment success. Conclusion: Our findings allowed us to identify important aspects in the mother-daughter relationship in AN, which may improve the clinical interventions aimed at treating the disorder.

Keywords

Anorexia nervosa, mother-child relations, qualitative research.