Abstract

Objectives: To investigate the sociodemographic and clinical profile of patients receiving treatment at a specialized service for children and adolescents with eating disorders (ED) in São Paulo, Brazil, and to compare data with the relevant literature.

Methods: This cross-sectional study assessed male and female patients with ED up to 18 years of age. All data were collected upon admission. Results: A total of 100 subjects were assessed. Mean age was 15.41±0.18 years, and mean age at ED onset was 13.5±0.19 years. Mean disease duration was 21.06 ±1.67 months. Of the total sample, 82% of the patients were female, 84% were Caucasian, 64% came from A and B economic tiers. Moreover, in 60% ED started at 14 years of age or less, and 74% had psychiatric comorbidities. Anorexia nervosa was the most prevalent diagnosis (43%). Hospitalized patients had lower body mass index, longer ED duration, and more severe scores on the Children's Global Assessment Scale than outpatients (p < 0.05).

Conclusions: Our young Brazilian patients with ED present epidemiological and symptomatic characteristics very similar to those found in the scientific literature, including a high prevalence of psychiatric comorbidities. The higher frequency of full syndrome ED, the predominance of cases with an early onset, the delay in beginning specialized treatment, and the more severe state of inpatients provide grounds for concern because these factors differ from what has been reported in reference studies and indicate greater ED severity.

Keywords

Anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, eating disorders, children, adolescents.