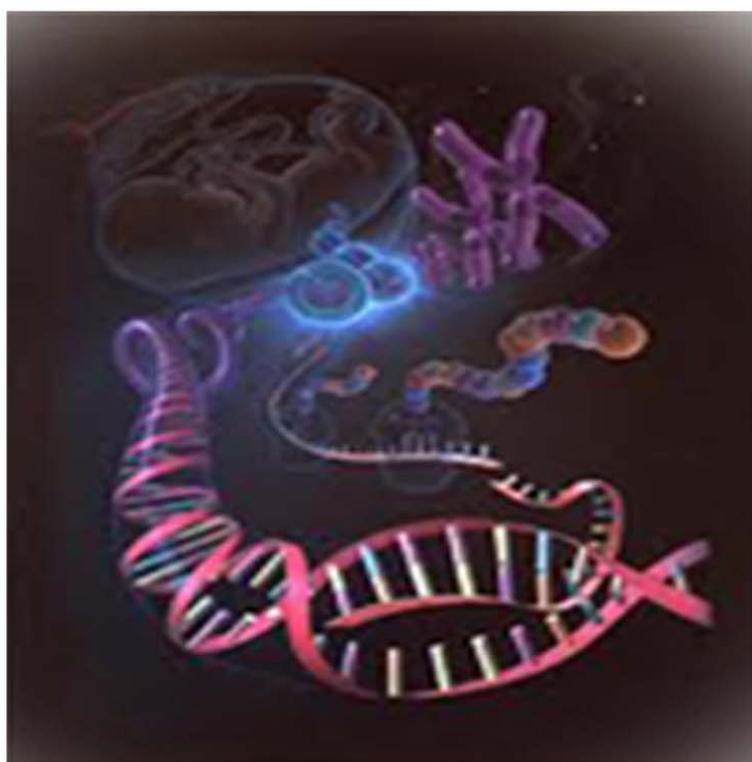




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Research Paper

STUDY TO ASSESS EATING DISORDER AMONG FEMALE MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Background: The eating disorders are a common health problem among adolescent females. The diagnoses of eating disorders are often missed by primary physicians because of varied and vague presentation. **Aims and objectives:** To assess the eating disorder problems among female medical students. **Materials and methods:** Cross sectional study was carried out on female medical students of BLDE University's Shri B M Patil Medical College, Bijapur. Oral questionnaire pertaining to eating disorder were distributed to students. Data was analyzed using proportions. **Results:** Of 130 students participated in the study, 19 (14.6%) were found to be having an eating disorder. Out of 19 students who had an eating disorder, 16 (84.2%) worried that they have lost control over eating and 14 (73.6%) said that food dominates their life. All the 19 (100%) who had an eating disorder believed that they are fat and didn't engaged in self-induced vomiting. Diet and exercise 6 (31.6%), was the common preventive measure taken to overcome eating disorder. **Conclusion:** SCOFF questionnaire was found to be an appropriate instrument for screening of eating disorders symptoms in adolescent populations.

Keywords: Anorexia nervosa, Bulimia, Eating disorder, SCOFF

INTRODUCTION

Eating disorders are among the most common psychiatric problems that affect young women (Kreipe and Birndorf, 2000) and these conditions impose a high burden of morbidity and mortality. Unfortunately, the diagnosis of eating disorders can be elusive, and more than one half of all cases go undetected (Becker *et al.*, 1999).

Eating disorders occur most commonly in adolescents and young adults and are 10 times

more common in females than in males. The principal eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and nonspecified eating disorder. Anorexia has two subtypes—restricting type and binge-eating/purging type. Bulimia also has two subtypes—purging and nonpurging. In young women, the risk of developing anorexia is 0.5 to 1%, and mortality is estimated at 4 to 10% (Mehler, 2001 and Herzog *et al.*, 1996). In the same population, the risk of developing bulimia is 2 to 5% (Kreipe and Birndorf, 2000 and Hsu, 1996)

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The present study was carried out to assess eating disorders among female medical students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was carried out in undergraduate female medical students of BLDE University's Shri B.M.Patil medical college, Bijapur. A total of 130 students were enrolled in the study. Students who were present on the day of study were included. Verbal consent was taken from the students. The SCOFF questionnaire was used to screen the participants. The SCOFF questionnaire is a brief and memorable tool designed to detect eating disorders and aid treatment. It showed excellent validity in a clinical population and reliability in a student population (Morgan *et al.*, 1999 and Perry *et al.*, 2002).

The questionnaire had 5 questions pertaining to eating disorder. For every question a score of one point was allotted and a total score of >2 was taken as an indicator of eating disorder (anorexia nervosa or bulimia). Along with SCOFF

questionnaire, additional questions pertaining to eating disorders were included in the study. Data was analyzed using proportions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 130 students were participated in the study. Out of them 19 (14.6%) students scored SCOFF score of >2, which indicates presence of either anorexia nervosa or bulimia (Table 1). Similar findings were observed in Mary- Anne et al study, where out of 129 students, 12 (9.3%) were found to be having eating disorder (Mary- Anne *et al.*, 2013).

Out of 19 students who had an eating disorder, 9 (47.3%) made themselves sick because they

Table 1: Distribution of Participants Based on SCOFF Scorings

SCOFF scoring>2	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	14.6
No	111	85.3

Table 2: Profile of the participants with Eating Disorder (n=19)

SCOFF Response		Frequency	Percentage (%)	
1	Do you make yourself Sick because you feeluncomfortably full?	Yes	9	47.3
		No	10	52.7
2	Do you worry you have lost Control over how muchyou eat?	Yes	16	84.2
		No	3	15.8
3	Have you recently lost more than One stone (6.3 kg) in a 3 month period?	Yes	3	15.8
		No	16	84.2
4	Do you believe yourself to be Fat when others say youare too thin?	Yes	19	100
		No	0	0
5	Would you say that Food dominates your life?	Yes	14	73.6
		No	5	26.4

Table 3: Distribution of the Participants Who Scored >2 SCOFF, Based on Response to Eating Disorder

Other Questions Related to Eating Disorders		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Engaged in Self-induced vomiting	Yes	0	0
	No	19	100
Eat to escape worries/troubles	Yes	11	57.8
	No	8	42.2
Read fitness magazines	Yes	8	42.2
	No	11	57.8
Weight affecting the way you live	Yes	5	26.4
	No	14	73.6
Age of first recall related to dieting and body imaging	14-17	7	36.9
	18-20	9	47.2
	No	3	15.7
BMI	<18.5	2	10.5
	18.5-24.9	15	79
	>24.9	2	10.5

Table 4: Measure Taken by the Participants to Overcome Eating Disorder

Measures	Frequency	Percentage
Diet	4	21
Exercise	2	10.5
Diet and Exercise	6	31.6
Exercise and Yoga	1	5.3
No measures	6	31.6

felt uncomfortable, 16 (84.2%) worried that they have lost control over eating and 3 (15.8%) lost the one stone in a 3 month period. All the 19 (100%) participants believed that they were fat and 14 (73.6%) said that food dominates their life (Table 2).

It was observed from the study that all the 19

(100%) students who had an eating disorder didn't engaged in self-induced vomiting and 11 (57.8%) opined that they eat to escape worries or troubles. Majority of students 9 (47.2%) who had an eating disorder had recalled their dieting and body imaging problems during age group of 18 to 20 years. The mean BMI of students with eating disorders was found to be 21.35. Normal BMI was observed in 15 (79%) students who had an eating disorder (Table 3).

Study done by John F Morgan *et al.* showed the Mean body mass index for controls, bulimic cases, and anorectic cases was 22.3 (SD 1.90), 24.4 (1.77), and 15.1 (0.76) respectively. Contrast to our findings, study done by Amy J Luck *et al.* showed that of the 341 women who agreed to take participate, one (who had a body mass index

of 17) had anorexia nervosa, three had bulimia nervosa, and nine had an “eating disorder not otherwise specified” (Amy J Luck *et al.*, 2002).

The common measures taken by the participants to overcome the eating disorders were Diet and exercise 6 (31.6%) followed by diet alone 4 (21%). No measure for controlling eating disorders were practiced by 6 (31.6%) students (Table 4).

CONCLUSION

The SCOFF questionnaire seems highly effective as a screening instrument for detecting eating disorders; it is simple, memorable, and easy to apply. It is an efficient screening tool for eating disorders. The SCOFF questionnaire is efficient at detecting cases of eating disorders in adult women in primary care. We recommend its use by healthcare professionals in primary care.

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