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EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTIONS IN ANOREXIA NERVOSA PATIENTS, OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE PATIENTS AND THEIR UNAFFECTED RELATIVES: SEARCHING FOR A NEW INTERMEDIATE PHENOTYPE

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Introduction: Some authors suggested that Anorexia Nervosa (AN) could be part of Obsessive-Compulsive Spectrum. Evidences suggested that Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) could be characterized by an impaired neuropsychological profile, referring particularly to cognitive flexibility, decision making and planning. It's possible that these deficits could represent possible endophenotypes that characterizes OCD spectrum.

Objectives: The aim of this study was compared , cognitive flexibility, decision making and planning in 38 patients with OCD, in 21 patients with AN and in their first degree unaffected relatives (OCD relatives: 46; AN relatives: 21). Results have been also compared to a sample of 41 healthy controls (HC) and their unaffected first degree relatives (43) .

Method: All participants have been assessed by a neuropsychological battery composed by the Iowa Gambling Task (IGT), the Wisconsin Sorting Card Test (WISC) and the Hanoi Tower (TH).

Results: Results showed an impaired cognitive flexibility only in OCD patients and their relatives. Patients with AN and their relatives didn't seem to be characterized by a deficit in this area. Results obtained from the TH scores showed an impaired planning ability both in OCD and AN patients. The same deficit has been also observed in OCD relatives. Impaired decision making seemed to characterize both AN and OCD patients, compared HC.

Moreover, OCD and AN relatives showed a deficit performance, suggesting an impairment in this function.

Conclusion: Results regarding planning and decision making seem to be in line with the hypothesis that this two domains could represent possible endophenotypes of obsessive compulsive spectrum.