

Prevalence of Orthorexia Nervosa in a Population of Young Italian Adults

E. Cinosi¹, I. Matarazzo¹, S. Marini¹, T. Acciavatti¹, M. Lupi¹, M. Corbo¹, R. Santacroce¹, F. Vellante¹, F. Sarchione¹, D. De Berardis¹, A. Carano¹, G. Di Iorio¹, G. Martinotti¹, M. Di Giannantonio¹

¹Neuroscience and Imaging, University "G. D' Annunzio" Chieti, Chieti, Italy

Introduction Orthorexia nervosa (ON) is an alleged eating disorder in which the person is excessively preoccupied with healthy food. First described by Bratman in 1997, ON entails a fixation on healthy food or a health food dependence. The term orthorexia nervosa arises from the Greek words orthos (=accurate) and orexis (=hunger) meaning obsession with healthy food and proper nutrition. Fears and worries about health, eating, and the quality of food are significant.

Objectives We investigated the prevalence of ON in a a population of young Italian adults by using a validated questionnaire (ORTO-15).

Aims We aimed to assess the prevalence of ON in a large sample of general population and to identify some possible specific correlation such as gender and Body Mass Index (BMI).

Methods 1453 adult subjects from the general population were administered the ORTO-15 test and investigated for gender, age and BMI. Statistical analyses were performed referring to diagnostic threshold (40).

Results Orthorexia had a 10,9% prevalence in our sample, with a female prevalence statistically significant (female vs male= 72,8% vs 27,2%). Moreover, age and Body Mass Index did not seem to be significant factors.

Conclusions ON is not currently considered as a full-fledged and discrete mental disorder. Again, the definition and diagnostic criteria of ON remain unclear. Further studies are needed to clarify appropriate diagnostic methods and the place of ON among psychopathological categories. This should be accompanied by a vigorous research effort aimed at understanding the *core* nature of this condition.