

Self-Injurious Behavior Among Individuals with Eating Disorders

Self-injurious behavior (SIB) and eating disorders frequently co-occur. A recent review of the literature demonstrated that the prevalence of SIBs among individuals with eating disorders ranges from 25.4% to 55.2%, and the prevalence of eating disorders among individuals with SIB ranges from 54% to 61% (Svirko & Hawton, 2007). SIB appears to be particularly common among individuals with Eating Disorder NOS and Bulimia Nervosa, affecting approximately 35% of individuals in each group at some point in their lives (Paul, Schroeter, Dahme, & Nutzinger, 2002). Women who suffer from both bulimia nervosa and SIBs also report greater laxative and illicit drug abuse (Anderson, Carter, McIntosh, Joyce, & Bulik, 2002). Though some research has shown relatively equal rates of both SIBs and substance use among individuals with Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder, rates of these behaviors are both higher among women with a history of physical or sexual abuse (Dohm et al., 2002). Other research has shown that SIBs are associated with trauma history, dissociative tendencies, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Paul et al., 2002). In addition, there appears to be a distinction between compulsive SIBs and impulsive SIBs. Among patients with Bulimia Nervosa, the compulsive type is associated with lack of interoceptive awareness, obsessionality, and shorter duration of illness; whereas, the impulsive type is associated with anxiety, depression, suicidality, and a history of sexual abuse (Favaro & Santonastaso, 1999, 2002). It is noteworthy that individuals often experience decreased pain associated with their injuries as SIBs continue over time (Claes, Vandereycken, & Vertommen, 2006).

References

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