Eating Disorders in Diverse Populations

Jason Nagata, MD, MSc
Department of Pediatrics
University of California, San Francisco
@jasonmnagata
Eating Disorders Prevalence

Lifetime prevalence

- 28.8 million Americans will have an eating disorder at some point during their lifetime
- 8.6% of females and 4.1% of males

One-year prevalence

- 2.6% of females and 0.7% of males

Eating Disorders in Boys and Men

• Most eating disorder and body image research focused on thinness and weight loss, particularly in females
• The masculine body ideal has become increasingly large and muscular
• 1/3 of teenage boys report trying to gain weight or bulk up
• 22% of young men engage in muscle-building behaviors

Nagata et al. (2021); Nagata et al. (2020) Curr Opin Pediatr
Disordered Eating Behaviors for Weight Loss

- Fasting/skipping meals
- Severe restriction of food intake
- Vomiting
- Laxatives
- Diuretics
Muscle-Building Behaviors

• Protein overconsumption
• Dietary restriction
  • Carbohydrates
  • Fats
• Muscle-Building Drugs and Supplements
  • Anabolic-androgenic steroids
  • Androstenedione
  • Creatine
• Excessive or compulsive exercise
Muscle Dysmorphia

• “Bigorexia” or “reverse anorexia”
• Preoccupation with the idea that their body is insufficiently muscular
• Subtype of body dysmorphic disorder in DSM-5 (2013)
Why underrecognized in boys and men?

- Gender stereotypes
- Diagnostic criteria often gendered
  - Loss of periods, focus on thinness
- Screening questions often focus on weight loss
  - Often don’t screen for excess exercise, muscle-building behaviors
- Double stigma of eating disorders in boys / men
Eating Disorders in LGBTQ+ Populations

• Stigma, discrimination, stress, barriers to care
• Eating disorders may be secondary to distress transgender individuals experience as part of body dissatisfaction
• Gender norms
  • Masculine: musculularity
  • Feminine: thinness
• Weight loss goals/behaviors
  • Transgender men (assigned female sex at birth) to suppress menses
  • Transgender women (assigned male sex at birth) body image features, thinness ideals
Self-Reported Lifetime Eating Disorder Diagnoses

• Transgender men
  • Lifetime eating disorder diagnosis 10.6%
  • Anorexia nervosa 4.2%
  • Bulimia nervosa 3.2%
  • Binge eating disorder 1.6%

• Transgender women
  • Lifetime eating disorder diagnosis 8.1%
  • Anorexia nervosa 4.1%
  • Bulimia nervosa 2.9%
  • Binge eating disorder 1.8%

• Gender-expansive (non-binary) people
  • Lifetime eating disorder diagnosis 13.8%
  • Anorexia nervosa 6.1%
  • Bulimia nervosa 2.5%
  • Binge eating disorder 2.1%

Nagata et al. (2020) *Eat Behav*; Nagata et al. (2020) *J Eat Disord*
Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations

• Discrimination, racism
• Barriers to care, especially mental health services
• Immigration and acculturation stress
• Diverse cultural attitudes toward eating, weight, body image
Eating disorders can affect people of all genders, sexual orientations, races, and ethnicities

Important for media to represent diversity in eating disorders
• Nagata et al. (2021). Eating disorders in boys and men
• Nagata et al. (2020). Eating disorders in adolescent boys and young men: an update
• Nagata et al. (2020). Emerging trends in eating disorders among sexual and gender minorities
• Rodgers et al. (2018). Eating disorders in ethnic minorities: an update