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Food Addiction and the Effective Treatment of Adult Food Addicts: An Integrative Review of Literature

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Abstract

Background: In a survey conducted between the years of 2011 and 2014 it was suggested that 36% of adults in the U.S. were obese with over 40.2% being middle aged adults. Obesity is associated with a number of comorbid conditions including diabetes, heart attacks, and strokes. Due to this it is one of the major factors driving up our annual medical care costs. It is also one of the leading causes of death not only in the U.S. but worldwide. With one third of the adult population in the U.S. being obese food addiction may very well be a factor.

Objective: The aim of this study was to synthesize the research available on food addiction and possible treatment options for those suffering from this addiction.

Methods: The format of the paper was an integrative literature review. Articles were found using the following databases: CINAHL, PsychINFO, PubMed, and ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source.

Results: After examining the literature food addiction was explained as an addiction that can be diagnosed like drug addiction through the use of the DSM-IV. In looking at the brain an increased excitement of the dopamine pathway in response to food was also noted. Treatment options highlighted in the research ranged from cognitive behavioral therapy to 12 step programs.

Supplements noted to reduce addiction and medications that would block the receptors that play a role in food consumption and dopamine receptors were also discussed.

Conclusion: The treatments and therapies explained in the literature are merely only suggestions. Most have yet to be tried on actual adult food addicts. In the future further studies should be conducted testing these treatment options on actual adult food addicts and also using a combination of the therapies together to see if that would lead to a better outcome.

Keywords: food addiction, over-compulsive eating, binge eating, treatments or therapies, and solutions to addiction