

by responding with adequate affective adjustment. High levels of insecure attachment are present in adults with Eating Disorders (EDs).

**Objectives** The variables that mediate the association between attachment style and EDs have not been investigated enough. The possibility exists that the endogenous stress response system is involved.

**Aims** To appraise the role of the endogenous stress response system, we studied the effect of attachment styles on the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis functioning in ED patients.

**Methods** Fifty-two women with EDs and 25 healthy women completed the ECR questionnaire to assess their attachment style. Saliva samples were taken in the morning to measure the Cortisol Awakening Response (CAR). Moreover, the saliva cortisol response to the Trier-Social-Stress-Test (TSST) was measured in 30 ED patients and 15 healthy controls.

**Results** Patients with avoidant attachment showed an increased CAR compared to both healthy controls and to patients with anxious and secure attachment styles. In the initial TSST phase, cortisol levels decreased in the secure attachment group but not in patients with avoidant attachment. In the TSST stress response phase, the cortisol raise was higher in insecure patients and delayed in avoidant ones.

**Conclusions** In adults with EDs, attachment styles affect the HPA axis functioning and this could have a role in the pathophysiology of EDs.

**Disclosure of interest** The authors have not supplied their declaration of competing interest.

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#### EV0454

### Insidious: The relationship between patients and their eating disorders and its impact on ED symptoms, illness duration and self-image

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Patients with eating disorders (EDs) often spontaneously talk about their disorder in terms of a symbolic other (a demon, a voice, a guardian). Further, externalizing exercises where patients are encouraged to separate their true self from their ED self are common in some treatment approaches. Yet, no previous quantitative study has investigated this phenomenon. We examined the patient-ED relationship (using the interpersonal structural analysis of social behavior methodology) and its implications for ED symptoms, illness duration and self-image. Participants were 16–25 year old female patients ( $N=150$ ) diagnosed with anorexia nervosa ( $N=55$ ), bulimia nervosa ( $N=33$ ) or eating disorder not otherwise specified ( $N=62$ ). Results suggested that patients had comprehensible and organized relationships with their EDs. EDs were primarily experienced as acting critical and controlling towards patients. Higher ED control was associated with more ED symptoms and longer illness duration, especially when coupled with patient submission. Patients reacting more negatively towards their EDs than their EDs were acting towards them had lower symptom levels and more positive self-images. Externalizing one's ED, relating to it like a symbolic other, seemed to make sense to patients and depending on its quality seemed to influence ED symptoms, illness duration and self-image. We put forward both clinical and theoretical implications based on the assumption that the patient-ED relationship may function in similar ways as real-life interpersonal relationships do.

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#### EV0455

### Anorexia nervosa and attachment

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**Introduction** Attachment is an innate programming whereby a child seeks for security. There is scientific and empirical evidence that insecure attachment is usual in eating disorder patients [1].

**Objectives** To highlight the relevance of attachment between child and caregivers, as well as its significance in therapeutic approach.

**Methods** A 17-year-old girl hospitalized after attending to emergency department due to fainting. BMI: 12.89. She reports restrictive behavior since age 11 that her mother regards as "child issues". Divorced parents, she grew up with her mother, diagnosed of hypochondria, who mentions not understanding why she is not the one who is hospitalized.

**Results** During hospitalization, she turned 18-years-old. Guardianship of her younger siblings was removed to her mother. She had a secure relationship with her 24-year-old sister, so she decided to move in with her. Later on, she had a positive progress, maintaining the gained weight and mood stability, although cognitive distortions persist.

**Conclusions** Among developmental and maintaining factors of eating disorders, impaired attachment is becoming increasingly interesting. Even though the main goal of treatment is weight restoration, exploring attachment patterns can facilitate to achieve that aim. This clinical case emphasizes the importance of attachment in eating disorders among child and young adults.

**Disclosure of interest** The authors have not supplied their declaration of competing interest.

**Reference**

- [1] Münch AL, Hunger C, Schweitzer J. An investigation of the mediating role of personality and family functioning in the association between attachment styles and eating disorder status. *BMC Psychol* 2016;4:36.

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#### EV0456

### Immunity and eating disorders.

#### Clinical description of a case

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**Introduction** Recently, there is an increasing interest in the link between anorexia nervosa and autoimmune diseases. Studies show