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THE EATING IMPULSE AFTER BARIATRIC SURGERY: A CLINICAL-QUALITATIVE STUDY IN A PUBLIC OUTPATIENT SERVICE IN SOUTHEAST BRAZIL

R. Magdaleno Jr[1], E.A. Chaim[2], E.R. Turato[1]

[1]Medical Psychology and Psychiatry - Laboratory of Clinical-Qualitative Research, [2]Surgery - Laboratory of Clinical-Qualitative Research, University of Campinas - Faculty of Medical Sciences, Campinas, Brazil

Introduction: Bariatric surgery provokes post-operative experiences which the patients are unprepared to deal with. This study aims at understanding the alteration of the eating impulse and how patients try to reorganize themselves emotionally after bariatric surgery.
Method: Clinical-qualitative method.
Results: After surgery, hunger starts to be experienced in a different way, as an emptiness, a pain, a weakness, that are attempts to describe primitive emotional sensations. The compulsive eating impulse is still present after the surgery. Areas of symbolic deficiency in obese patients brings serious mental consequences and limits the capacity of the morbidly obese to deal with the impact of the drive demand, leaving only the direct path of the discharge through the ingestion of food. Satiety is altered by the surgery, whereas satiation is not.
Conclusions: The hunger of operated patients is diminished; however, the sensation of satiation is not achieved, leading to feelings of anguish, emptiness and weakness, which often end in the patients seeking alternative means to obtain satisfaction. That which the patients referred to as hunger before the surgery is a complex of physical and emotional sensations. These are transformed into vague sensations, through lack of psychic elements that could make an elaboration of the anguish possible, keep the patient imprisoned in a vicious circle of dissatisfaction and seeking of food. It is crucial to provide to patients psychosocial guidance, clinical and psychiatric care. In these patients we have to deal with mental representation's emptiness and therefore help them in the task of creating symbols.