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Psychological aspects of exercise among females with eating disorders: Comparing active versus recovered cases

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Exercise as a means to control weight is common among individuals with eating disorders. This study will examine the connection between exercise and eating disorder status by comparing a sample of active versus recovered eating disordered patients on various aspects of exercise. All current ($n = 46$) and former ($n = 263$) eating disorder patients of the University of Missouri Adolescent Clinic have been contacted for participation, and the current project reports on the preliminary data from 20 study participants. Eating disorder status will be determined based on a diagnostic interview, the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Diagnosis (SCID). Exercise data will be collected related to motivations for exercise (Reasons for Exercise Inventory, including motivations of: weight control, fitness, improvement of body tone, health, improvement of overall physical attractiveness, enjoyment, and improvement of mood), typical exercise patterns (amount and intensity), the extent to which guilt is experienced after the postponement of exercise, and cognitions related to exercise. Regarding motivation, we expect that those in the active eating disorder group will score higher on exercise motives related to appearance and weight and lower on the reasons for exercise related to enjoyment and mood improvement. In addition, those in the active group who engage in exercise are hypothesized to report greater guilt after postponement of exercise and greater obsessive thoughts about exercise. Results will be discussed in the context of how reasons for exercise may change as part of recovery from eating disorders, with possible clinical implications for treatment programs explicitly addressing exercise.