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Eating Disorders and Addictive Behaviors: Implications for Human Health

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Message from the Guest Editors

Eating disorders (ED) are mental disorders with significant impact on physical–medical health and psychological wellbeing. The most frequent eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder.

The etiology of ED comprises a complex network of biological, psychological, and contextual–social factors. The onset of eating-related problems is usually during school-age and adolescence; however, the progression of the disorders evolves across the lifespan.

Epidemiological studies have observed a frequent co-occurrence between eating disorders and addictive behaviors (AB), including substance-related disorders (tobacco, alcohol) and behavioral addictions (gambling disorder, gaming disorder, compulsive buying). The dual comorbid profile of ED with AB has been related to shared risk factors, such as genetics, family history, the presence of specific life events (cumulative childhood trauma), personality traits (novelty seeking and high levels of sensitivity to reward–punishment), neurobiological mechanisms (disturbances in neurotransmitter functions such as dopamine serotonin, or endogenous opiates), and compulsive actions.



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