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Potential benefit of psychostimulants in the treatment of Bulimia Nervosa

Kristin Lulich

Coastal Psychiatric Medical Associates, Inc., USA

Statement of the Problem: In recent years there have been numerous advances in the treatment of depressive and anxiety disorders, however, there has been little progress and few innovations in the treatment of eating disorders such as Bulimia Nervosa (BN) despite the prevalence of these disorders and the morbidity/mortality associated with them. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) have been the mainstays of treatment with limited response. There is a need for more effective treatment and understanding of these conditions. The purpose of this case report is to examine an individual with significant history of BN and her response to an alternative treatment method.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: An in-depth psychiatric assessment was conducted; past treatment trials and failures were examined. A history of frequency of episodes of bingeing and purging was taken as well as recording of current weight. She was continued on 200mg of sertraline, which she had been taking for several months, and was started on Vyvanse (lisdexamfetamine dimesylate) 20mg. She was seen for a follow-up visit 23 days later, number of episodes of bingeing and purging over the 23 days was taken as well as her current weight.

Findings: In the initial 23 days after starting 20mg of lisdexamfetamine dimesylate frequency of binge/purge episodes had significantly reduced from 4-5 episodes a day prior to treatment, to no reported episodes of binge/purging since the initiation of treatment. Her weight remained stable, with no observed weight loss.

Conclusion & Significance: The positive response the patient demonstrated suggests the use of stimulant medication such as lisdexamfetamine dimesylate may be an effective treatment for reducing binge/purge episodes associated with BN. Sustained, long-term benefit of this kind of treatment and efficacy in larger sample sizes may be an area for future study.

kristinlulich@gmail.com

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