THE PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF ENDOCANNABINOIDS IN THE EATING DISORDERS

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Eating Disorder (ED) is a syndrome characterized by persistent alteration of eating behavior and the conditions that cause an insufficient ingestion and/or adsorption of foods. There are three different ED diseases: Anorexia Nervosa (AN), Bulimia Nervosa (BN) and Binge Eating Disorders (BED). ED are complex conditions that arise from a combination of long-standing behavioral, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors. The neuronal circuits that control the ingestion of food are mainly related to catecholaminergic, serotoninergic and peptidergic systems. In this respect, while serotonin, dopamine and prostaglandin promote the ingestion of food, by contrast, neuropeptide Y, norepinephrine, GABA and opioid peptides inhibit food ingestion thus causing the occurence of ED. The drugs mainly used in the treatment of ED are antidepressants such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and tricyclic antidepressant. Additionally, mood stabilizers (lithium), anxiolytics, serotonin and noradrenalin reuptake inhibitors and antipsychotic drugs are often used in the treatment of ED.

Several studies indicate that the endocannabinoid system is involved in ED supporting the idea that the cannabinoid signalling system is a key modulatory element in the activity in the brain area associated with ED.