

**Title: Comparison of Orthorexia in healthcare professionals vs. the general public**

Taryn Burke M.S., Ali Gray DeLoache M.S., Suzanne Doad M.S., Ashley Harrington M.S., Beka Homan M.S., Eddie McAleer M.S., Toni Mamajek M.S., Melinda Terry B.S., Stephanie Nielsen, MS, RD, LD, Wanda M. Koszewski, PhD, RD, LD, FAND, Department of Human Nutrition, Gary Brooks, PhD, Department of Mathematics, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC 29733

**Background:** Orthorexia nervosa (ON) is a disorder defined as pathological obsession with the quality of food. It has components of obsessive-compulsive behaviors, body dysmorphia, and anxiety disorders. Healthcare professionals may be at greater risk of ON due to an increased awareness about the connection between food and health.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study is to compare the prevalence of ON among healthcare professionals and the general public, and to help identify risk factors for its development.

**Methods:** Healthcare professionals are defined as anyone over the age of 18 years with a certification or registration credentials in a healthcare profession. The general public subjects are defined as anyone over the age of 18 years in a profession that does not have a certification or registration credentials in a healthcare profession. This study utilized the ORTO-15 questionnaire to determine orthorexic tendencies. This study surveyed a convenience sample of 77 healthcare and non-healthcare professionals.

**Results:** Results from the study indicated that there was not a significant difference in the prevalence of orthorexic behaviors in medical professionals versus the non-medical, general public. Orthorexia seems to be tied deeply with psychological attributes of a person and not just their environment and nutritional knowledge. Thus, the prevalence of ON does not differ between health professionals and non-health professionals.

**Conclusion:** Additional research regarding nutrition education levels, as well as psychosocial factors would help to shed light on the complex factors that play a role in ON prevalence.