

Marking anorexia with a brain protein

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Eating disorders are frequently seen as psychological or societal diseases, but do they have an underlying biological cause? A new study shows that the levels of a brain protein differ between healthy and anorexic women.

Anorexia is a serious and occasionally fatal eating disorder most commonly affecting women. Scientists do not yet understand the physical causes of anorexia, though some studies suggest a link to low levels of a brain protein called BDNF. Now, a study recommended by Cynthia Bulik, a member of Faculty of 1000 Medicine and leading expert in the field of <u>psychiatry</u> and eating disorders, shows that BDNF levels are higher in women who have recovered from anorexia. This suggests that low BDNF levels may be reversible.

Researchers at Chiba University in Japan found that anorexic women had lower levels of BDNF in their blood than healthy women or those who had recovered from anorexia. <u>Women</u> with low BDNF also had the lowest self-image, suffered from anxiety and depression, and performed poorly on certain tests of cognitive ability.

Further study is needed to determine what role BDNF plays in anorexia, and if it can be used to predict the risk of developing it, but Bulik forecasts that "...BDNF may emerge as a useful biomarker of [anorexia] and of recovery from [anorexia]."

<u>More information:</u> The full text of this article is available at <u>www.f1000medicine.com/article/ ... 22bkxq27p/id/1162024</u>



Source: Faculty of 1000: Biology and Medicine

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