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Access to and attitudes toward treatment of psychogenic eating disorders in Bulgaria

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In Bulgaria and in the developed countries, an epidemiologic increase of the rate of psychogenic eating disorders (hyperphagia, anorexia, bulimia), as well as lowering and broadening of the age limit of affected persons can be observed.

- Consequences are heavy somatic disturbances and lethal outcome in some cases. The patients have disturbance social life, heavy psychic problems and difficulties in almost all spheres of life. The problem touch patient, family background and surroundings. In this context a research devoted to such significant health and social problem - Psychogenic eating disorders. The higher efficiency of prevention and treatment is in close connection with the education (in family, schools) and recognition of contemporary's health style of thinking and behavior, nutritious culture, physical activities.



Aim:

- The attitudes toward and awareness on contracting hyperphagia, anorexia, bulimia, and the options, demand, and barriers of the access to care for patients with a psychogenic eating disorder have been studied.

Materials:



- 700 individuals (men and women, with an eating disorder and risk groups), over 12 years of age, from various different size populated areas in the country have been covered.

Methods:

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- survey method, clinical surveillance, documentary method for research of the official statistical information, mathematical and statistical analysis.



Results:

Trends in incidence of eating disorders:

Statistical data in Bulgaria show two extreme tendencies among the young population - obesity and underweight.

- 17% of the women aged between 18-30 years, and 8% of the girls below 18 years of age are underweight.
- Data published in 2008 report that 250,000 patients suffer from an eating disorder (anorexia, bulimia).|



Results:

- One of every five Bulgarian scholars is overweighted, and Bulgaria is the second country in the world, after the USA, with most overweighted and obese citizens
- 63% of the men, and 46% of the women of economically active age are overweighted,
- 17% of the men and 19% of the women are obese.



Results:

- There is no doubt that foods and eating, and the level of physical activity may have a significant impact of a person's health status – both physical and mental.
- Data from the specialized literature and our observations demonstrate concomitant anxiety, symptoms of depression, higher stress levels, abuse of psychoactive substances (alcohol, medicines, drugs), in most individuals with a psychogenic eating disorder.



Results:

- This problem becomes even bigger with the fact that obesity is a main risk factor, which induces diseases of blood-circulation organs, cancer diseases, endocrine system diseases (especially, type 2 diabetes). Epidemiology data from the recent years in Bulgaria demonstrate an alarming increase in morbidity and mortality due to these diseases (table 1, based on official data by the National Statistical Institute. In Bulgaria, the mortality due to stroke is particularly high, and it places Bulgaria on the 5th or 6th position in the world list.



Tabl.1

Causes of death in 2008	Total	Men	Women
Total	110523	58303	36443
Diseases of the blood-circulation organs	71492	35049	36443
Neoplasms	18179	10630	7549
Diseases of the endocrine system, eating and metabolic disorders	2181	965	1216
Mental and behavior disorders	90	57	33



Results:

- Data analysis performed within this study identified several basic issues: with a morbidity rate in raise, there is a lack of awareness of the severity of the somatic and psychic consequences and complications of these conditions, and of the development of severe secondary diseases; the real danger and risk of a lethal income is not being taken into account. A higher level of self management is needed.

Attitudes and behavior habits of studied individuals:

- One of the reasons that provokes the appearance and development of psychogenic nutrition disorder – anorexia and bulimia, is the fact that growing generation and young people pay extremely high attention to body's slimness as a factor of self assessment and assessment. Self assessment depends on the appearance for 46,77% of the interviewed women and for 22,75% - only sometimes. Only 37,77% of men share that appearance is determining for their self evaluation and for 15,25% - only sometimes.

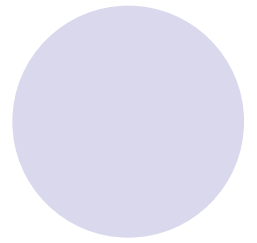
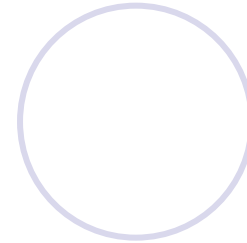
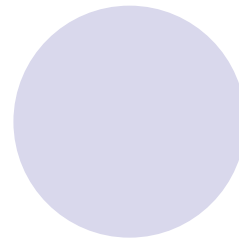
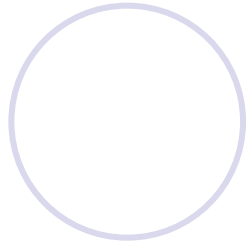
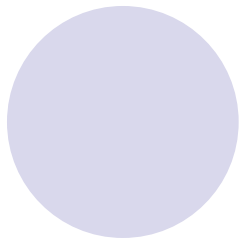
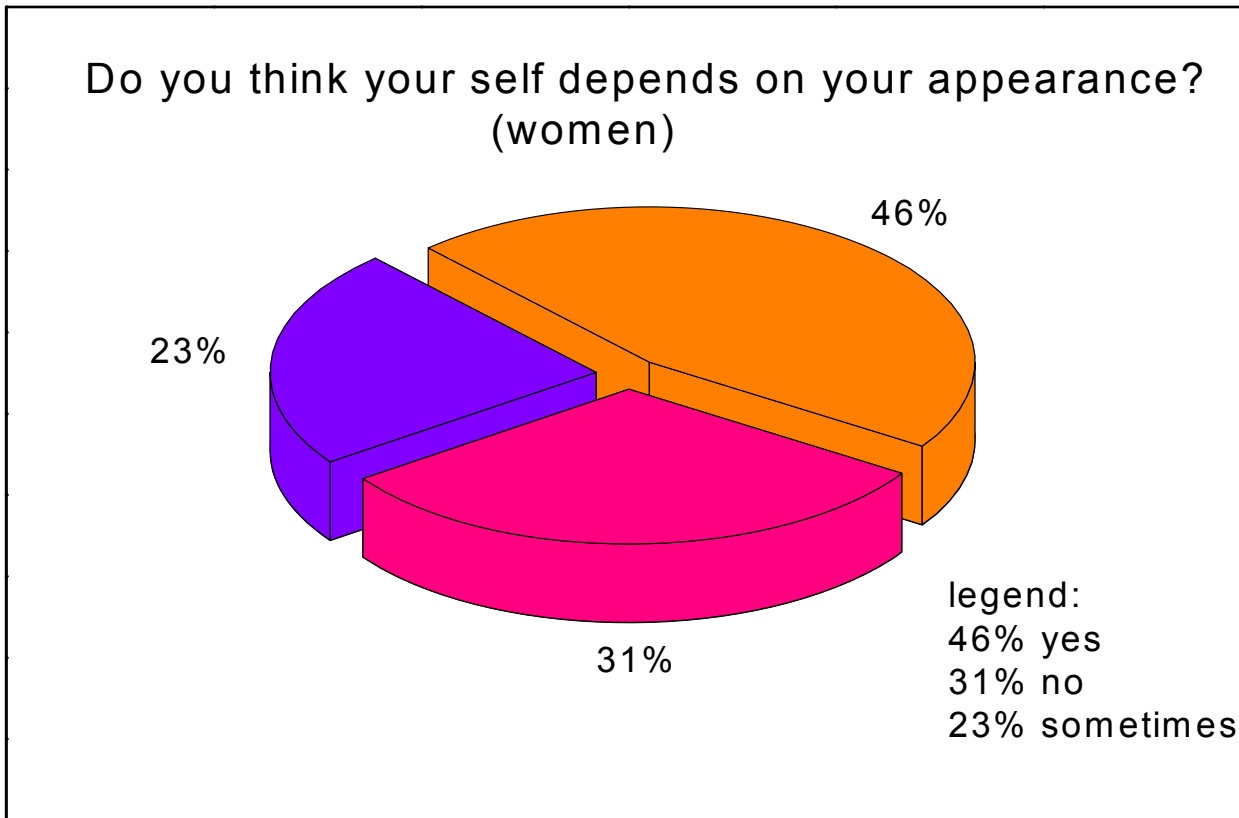


Fig.1



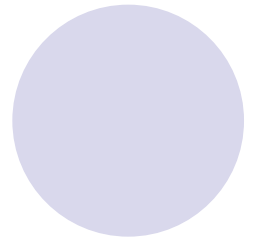
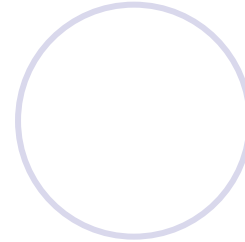
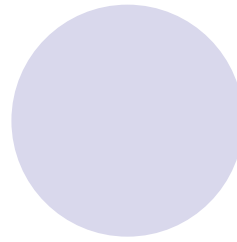
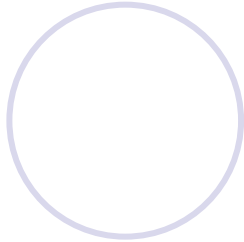
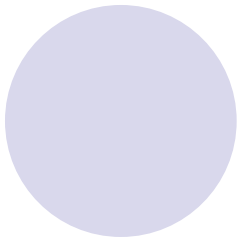
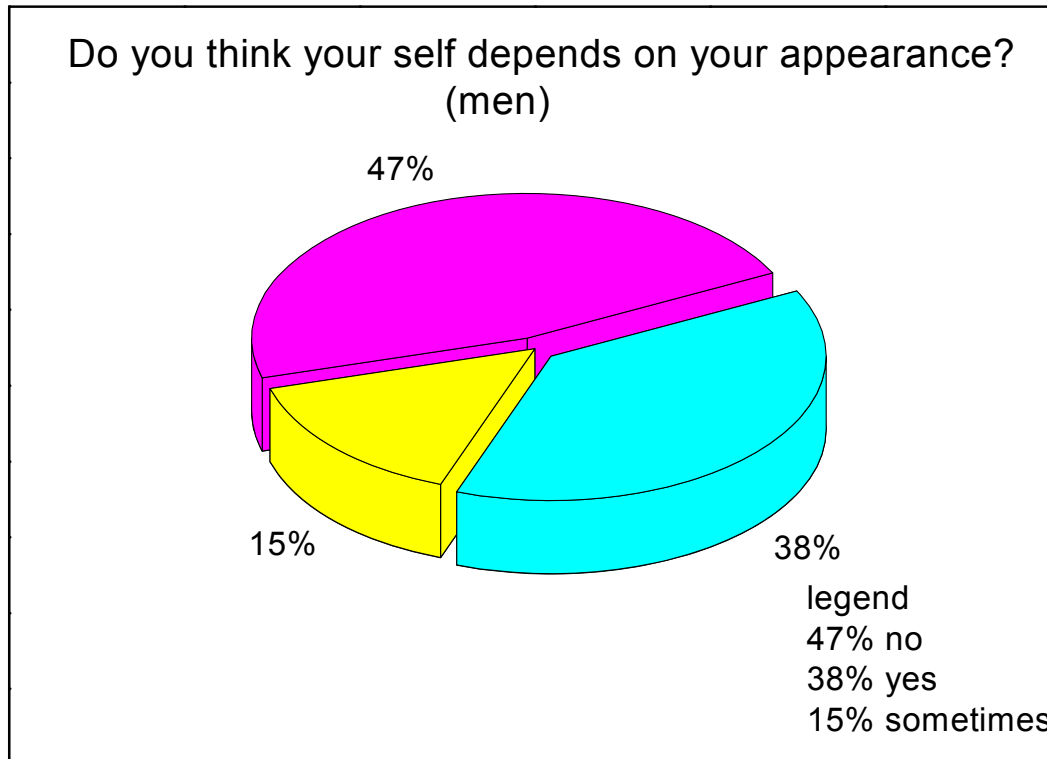


Fig.2





Results:

- These data confirm the ongoing tendency, especially among women, that physical qualities are dominating criterion for good self confidence. The latest is being provoked by socio-cultural tendencies and pseudo values like achieving and maintaining slim body shape close to the image and the appearance of the models. Models with extremely slim physical appearance are standard for beautiful body and symbol of successful and wanted woman. Inquiry data show that only 20% of women do not like models while for men this percentage is 34.

Results:

- Physical training and sport are represented in interviewed individuals' lives. Only 33% of women and 28% of men do not practice any form of physical activity.
- Unfortunately only 33% of women do sport for health protection and their main motivation remains weight maintenance. Seventy seven percent 77% of men do sport for maintaining good health. (some of the studied individuals chose two answers).

Fig.3

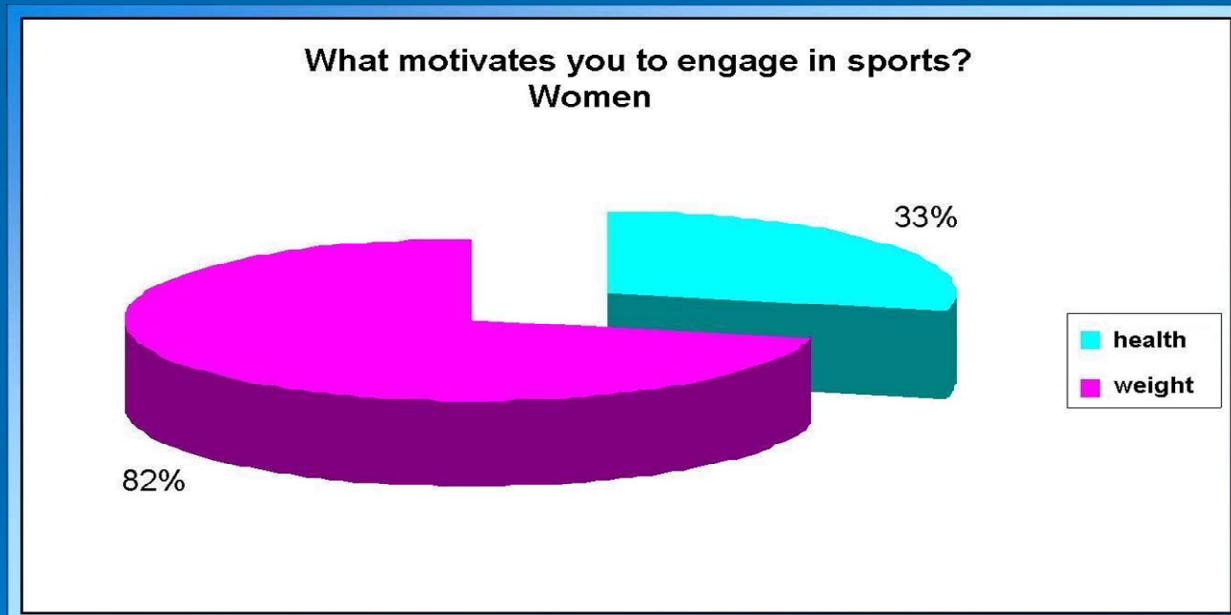
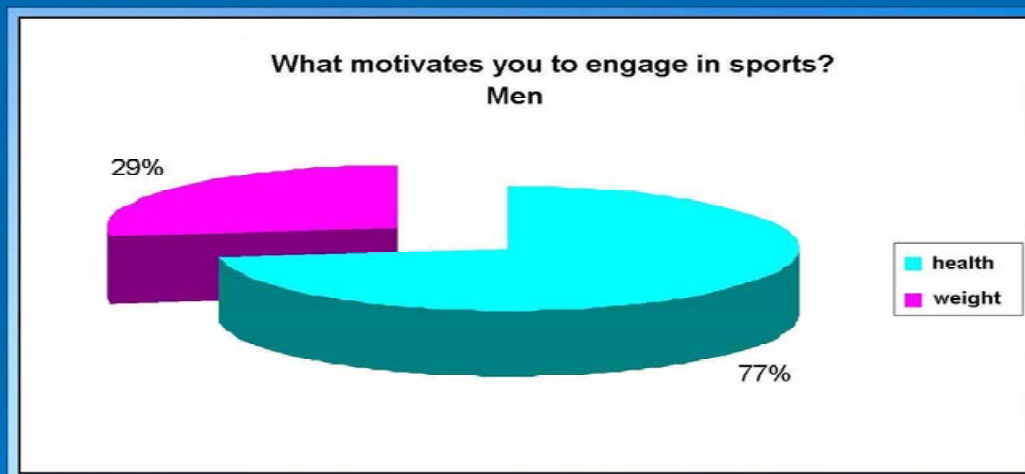
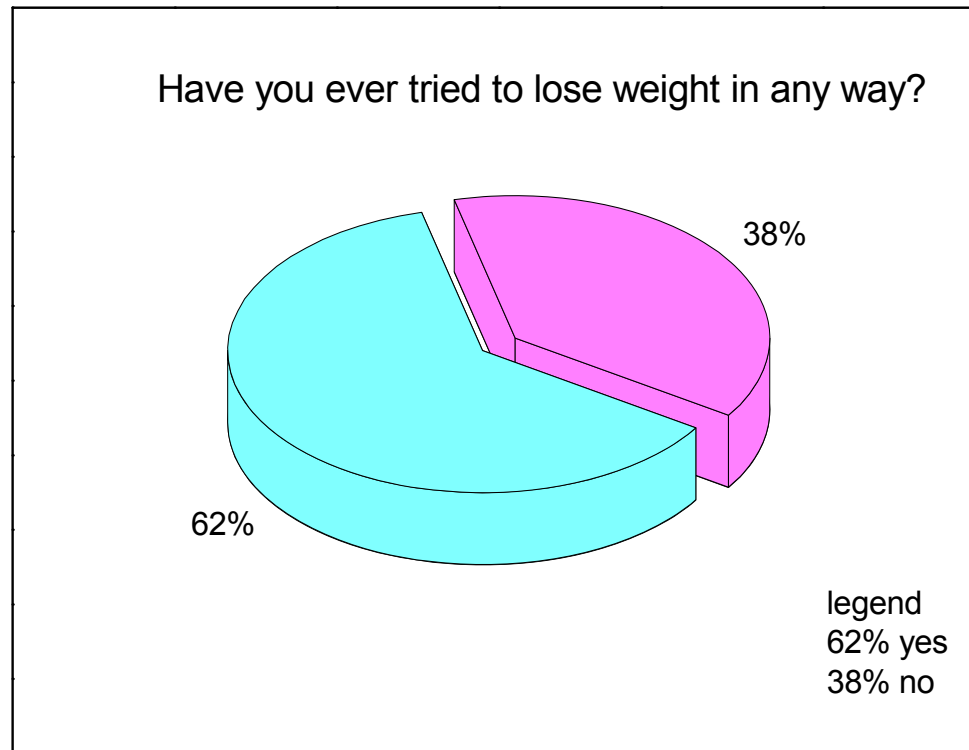


Fig.4



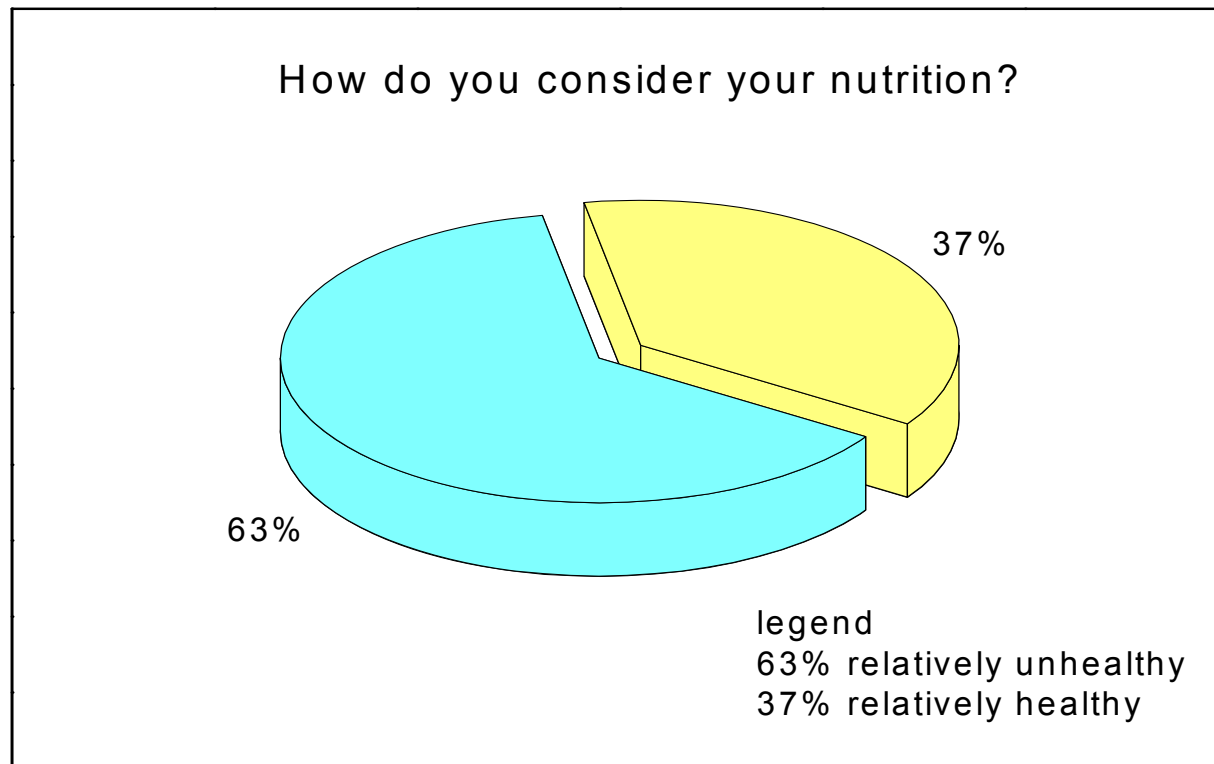
Frequent phenomenon among the young people is attempts to lose weight through diets, motor activities and slimming drugs.

Fig.5



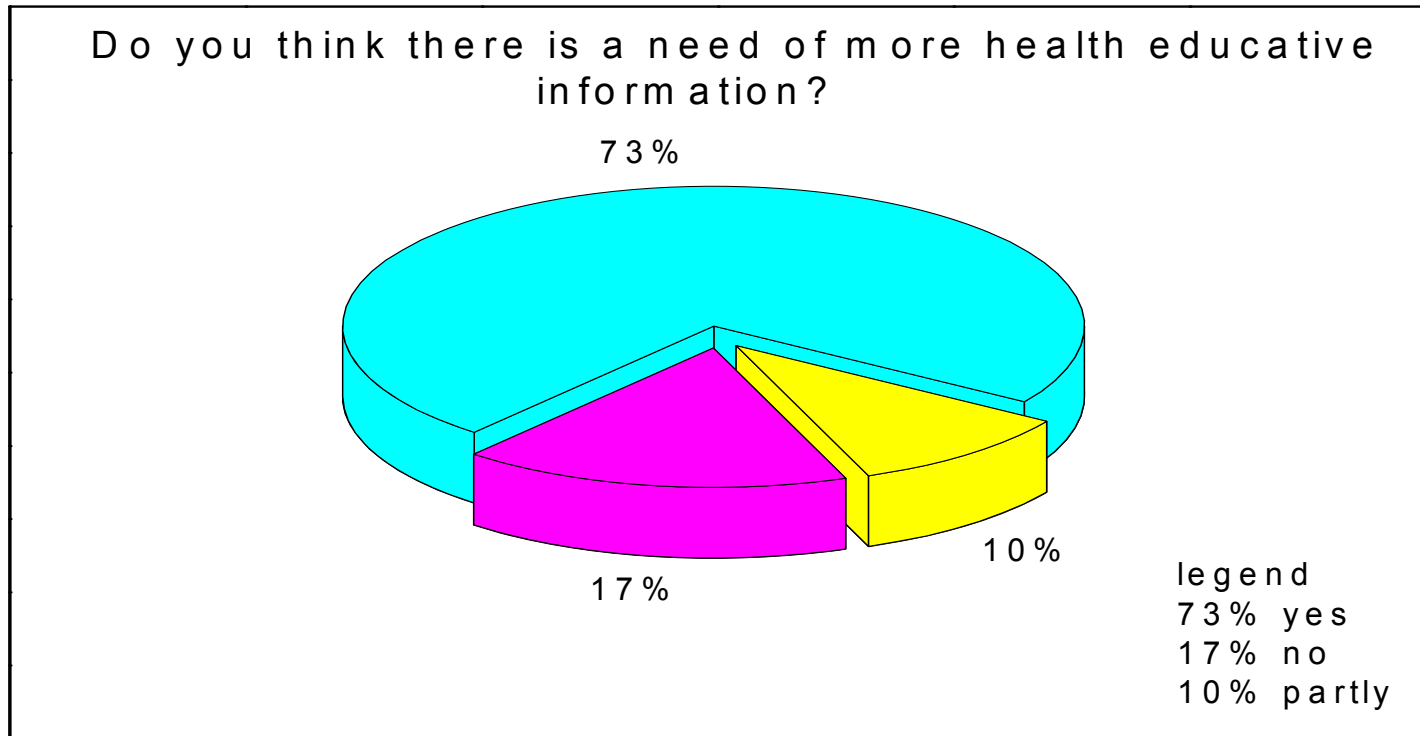
The reasons for overweight and obesity are not only overeating, inappropriate diet, lack of physical activity but the choice of the type of food too. For the bigger part of the people that took part in the survey, the healthy nutrition as a preferred diet is not typical.

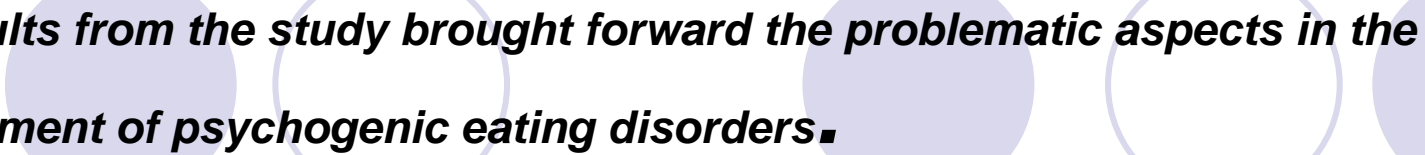
Fig.6



73% of the surveyed stated their need of health information for eating disorder prevention and treatment. Preferable forms of informing on psychogenic nutrition disorders issues are health educating activities in schools, presentations and discussions.

Fig.7





Results from the study brought forward the problematic aspects in the treatment of psychogenic eating disorders.

- The attitudes toward searching a treatment outline two alarming tendencies – insufficient motivation for treatment, and unawareness of the risk to health. Main reasons for these are unwillingness or fear and shame of recognizing the disease, financial incapability. A certain part (32%) of the studied individuals share that they have no faith in the treatment effectiveness and successful outcome. This results in worsening of the eating disorder and complicating its successful treatment, and in increasing of the secondary somatic complications.

Results:

- Access barriers to treatment depend to a large extent on what is being currently offered – a lack of specialized institutions. Only a few populated areas have specialists – physicians, psychotherapists, who are trained to treat psychogenic eating disorders, however their number is insufficient.
- Access to these specialists is associated with additional travel and stay costs, absence from school or work. Mean treatment period of the studied patients is 6 months to a year. There is no ‘clinical pathway’ to entirely or partially cover the treatment, which is the practice in some other countries. This treatment is entirely covered by the patient (direct payments by the patient).

Conclusions:

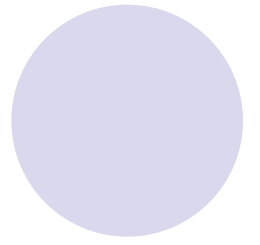
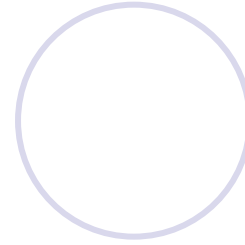
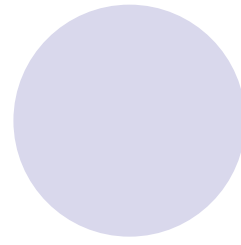
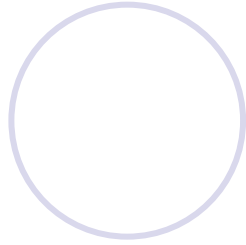
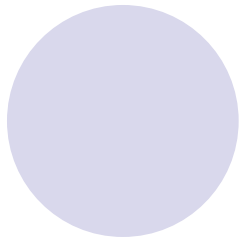


Data from the study allow for the following conclusions and recommendations:

- The reformation of the Bulgarian healthcare system needs to give an effective response to the social needs on health preservation, prevention and a quality and accessible medical care.
- An appropriate funding needs to be ensured in a rational and effective way in terms of costs and needs for access to treatment, for opening specialized centers, for a focused training of professionals, and for the development of preventive actions and programs.
- Improvement of self management to enhance awareness and personal responsibility towards health and life style.
- The results from the empirical research and analyses done give the opportunity to make prevention programs, according to the health reform in Bulgaria and the National plan for psychological health for the period 2004-2012.

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