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Anorexia nervosa is a disorder characterised by self starvation due to fear of fatness which is accompanied by endocrine disturbances such as amenorrhoea. It is becoming commoner in the developed world. The condition has not been described in Sri Lanka before.

The author screened the records of all the admissions to psychiatry unit since 1981 for features suggestive of anorexia. Of the 18 patients with suspected anorexia nervosa when interviewed only 11 could be diagnosed.

The features of these patients are given below.

Table

	Age of onset	Weight	Vomit- ing	POA	Fear of Fatness	Body Image	Follow up weight	EAT Score
G.R.	? 40 yrs.	32Kg	+	+	+	x 2	36 Kg	—
P.K.	22 yrs.	30Kg	-	+	-	?	—	31
R.M.K.	35 yrs.	34Kg	-	+	-	x 3	40 Kg	53
L.N.	25 yrs.	31Kg	+	+	-	x 3	40 kg	—
K.R.	20 yrs.	33Kg	-	+	-	x 2	33 Kg	48
F.I.	16 yrs.	27Kg	+	+	-	-	40 Kg	55
I.M.	30 yrs.	30Kg	+	+	-	-	30 Kg	—
W.D.S.	25 yrs.	30Kg	+	+	-	-	—	—
M.B.	20 yrs.	32Kg	-	+	-	x 2	36 Kg	43
P.M.	18 yrs	34Kg	-	(male)	-	x 2	43 Kg	46

Mean age 22.8

Mean weight 31.3 Kg

Mean weight 37.25 Kg.

All the patients satisfy two of Russels criteria ie. self-starvation leading to severe loss of weight and amenorrhoea. Two of them had low FSH and LH levels.

Only one expressed a fear of fatness whereas the others expressed a wish to become fatter while starving themselves. This may be a special feature of anorexia nervosa in Sri Lanka.

In all those who were tested (6) there was gross overestimation of their body image.

6 were able to complete the EAT questionnaire and all scored above 30 which is the accepted cut off point.

Lastly, 6 of the patients had serious difficulties with their sex lives or family lives at the onset of the illness -- a finding common in Western patients.

This is the first ever described series of patients with anorexia nervosa in Sri Lanka. Except for the lack of fear of fatness these patients correspond to the syndrome described in the West. The lack of awareness of this disorder leads to erroneous diagnosis and without proper treatment many may be dying preventable deaths.

10th Dec. 1987 (Thursday) 01.15 p.m. - 01.30 p.m.