

Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0165-1781(16)30696-5
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2016.04.072>
Reference: PSY9636

To appear in: *Psychiatry Research*

Received date: 2 July 2015
Revised date: 16 February 2016
Accepted date: 21 April 2016

Cite this article as: Olga Pollatos and Eleana Georgiou, Normal interoceptive accuracy in women with bulimia nervosa, *Psychiatry Research* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2016.04.072>

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Abstract

Previous studies suggest that patients suffering from bulimia nervosa (BN) have difficulties in perceiving internal bodily signals, mostly assessed by self-report questionnaires. Whether interoception is, in this case, attenuated or not remains an open question. Therefore, interoceptive processes were examined in twenty-three patients with current BN and were compared to healthy participants. We investigated Interoceptive Accuracy (IAc) assessed by the heartbeat detection task and Interoceptive Awareness (IA) assessed by the Eating Disorder Inventory-2. Patients with BN and healthy participants did not differ in terms of IAc when controlling for BMI, depression and anxiety, whereas IA among BN patients was found to have decreased. Although IAc and IA were not related among controls, we observed an inverse correlation in BN, suggesting that an abnormal overlap between these two levels of interoceptive signal processing is present in BN. The current study introduces a new perspective concerning the role of interoceptive processes in BN and generates further questions regarding the therapeutic utility of methods targeting the interaction between different levels of interoception in the treatment of BN.

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