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words

## Bulimia

Janet Treasure, Gerald Russell

Why has bulimia emerged as a common symptom in many psychiatric disorders? Could the food environment be the explanation? Certainly, many changes have occurred. First, foods high in salt, sugar and fat as well as palatability are a widespread resource. Second, eating is less embedded into social routines. Third, the desire to control body size is fashionable. If animals are exposed to similar perturbations in their environment, they binge eat and changes in brain reward systems similar to those with substances of misuse occur. Thus, food addiction could be a cause of the obesity pandemic with implications for policy needed.

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## Bulimia nervosa

Gerald Russell, Janet Treasure

Psychiatrists have generally reacted nonchalantly to the relatively sudden eruption of bulimia nervosa some 50 years ago. Admittedly, its clinical description in 1979 secured its place in the main systems of classification, a place which has stood the test of time. Effective treatments have also been developed. But little is known about the aetiology of bulimia nervosa even though there must have been powerful reasons for its appearance out of the blue. The clarification of its causes would certainly have been faster had psychiatrists and social scientists wakened sooner to the significance of bulimia nervosa as a new psychiatric disorder.

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