



CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2015 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s) Manaal A. Sayed	Project Number 35514
Project Title Eating Disorders Comorbid with Depression: A Growing Problem among Teens	
Objectives/Goals Eating disorders are a growing problem among teenagers and could possibly have a significant impact on their health. I became interested in this project because I constantly saw how one of my close friends was emotionally and physically affected by the symptoms of her eating disorder. The purpose of this project is to find out if eating disorders are comorbid with depression among teenagers and what the main cause of eating disorders is. My hypothesis is that eating disorders are comorbid with depression and higher stress levels are the main cause of eating disorders. Abstract Methods/Materials After contacting 40 high schools in Los Angeles and Orange County, 487 teenagers between the ages of 13-18 participated in this study. The sample consisted of 60% females and 40% males. I designed my own anonymous survey that had screening questions for eating disorders, depression and possible causes for this condition. 4 practicing psychiatrists helped me finalize my survey. They also guided me on how to analyze and score the surveys using 2 alternate methods. Teachers at the participating high schools passed out the surveys during class time. Results 62% of the surveyed teenagers with eating disorders also experienced depression. The main cause of eating disorders was cultural factors, not stress. 80% of the surveyed teenagers who had an eating disorder were females. The surveys demonstrate that females are more sensitive to peer pressure than their male counterparts. Conclusions/Discussion There is a link between eating disorders and depression, but the main cause of an eating disorder is cultural factors, not higher stress levels. Some limitations to the project were that all possible causes of eating disorders were not included in my study. I hope that these types of screening questions could be included in regular health screening questions in high schools. Early detection may lead to early intervention and create a positive impact on the treatment of these disorders. Most research conducted by universities and health organizations on this topic has been on fewer than 200 participants. I hope to continue with this study, which started out to be a science project and has now become an intensive study beyond the science fair.	
Summary Statement This project attempts to determine the relationship between eating disorders and depression among teens and find its main cause.	
Help Received 4 practicing Psychiatrists helped finalize my surveys and gave guidelines on analyzing them; 487 participants and their teachers from various schools; and my parents helped me with the board and driving to the schools and psychiatrists.	