

Title: Prevalence of Orthorexia in College Students

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Objective: The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of Orthorexia Nervosa (ON) tendencies among health-related majors (Human Nutrition, Exercise Science, Athletic Training, and Physical Education) at a small public university in the southeastern region of the United States.

Design, Methods and Instrumentation: Prevalence of ON symptomatology was measured using ORTO-15. ORTO-15 was distributed via email Qualtrics survey to students in health fields. A score of less than 40 on the questionnaire was considered positive display of ON tendencies. Chi-squared goodness-of-fit test was used to examine the relationship between age and grade to prevalence of ON symptomatology.

Results: ON tendencies were observed in 82% health majors surveyed. Statistical significance was observed between both age and grade. Prevalence of participants displaying ON tendencies decreased with age and graduate status. P-values for both groups were determined to be  $< 0.0001$

**Table 1.** Demographics of n=144 students who completed ORTO-15 questionnaire

Demographics	n=25	n= 119
	S-NON	S-ON
	n (%)	
<u>Sex</u>		
Female	22 (19.64)	90 (80.36)
Male	3 (9.68)	28 (90.32)
Prefer not to answer	0 (0)	1 (100)
<u>Age</u>		
17-20	11 (16.18)	57 (83.82)
21-24	9 (16.36)	46 (83.64)
25+	8 (38.1)	13 (61.9)
<u>Grade</u>		
Lower classmen	10 (18.52)	44 (81.48)
Upper classmen	11 (15.28)	61 (84.72)
Graduate students	4 (22.22)	14 (77.78)

S-NON = Students who scored as not at risk for Orthorexia Nervosa based on scoring  $\geq 40$  on ORTO-15

S-ON = Students who scored  $< 40$  on ORTO-15

Conclusions: High prevalence rates are congruent with similar studies examining ON in health-related educational and professional fields. As suggested by previous studies, very high prevalence rates potentially indicate diagnostic tool insufficiency. The results of this study reiterate the need for development of a modified targeted version of ORTO-15. Currently, ORTO-15 neither assesses indicators of social isolation and obsessive behaviors, nor includes a comprehensive dietary intake analysis. Health students may be at increased risk of displaying or developing ON tendencies. However, research to develop a more sensitive and specific diagnostic tool is necessary to assess well-being of health-related majors in relation to display of ON tendencies.