

THE SIXTH CRITERION OF THE METABOLIC SYNDROME

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Introduction: The Metabolic Syndrome (MetS) is defined as a cluster of cardiometabolic risk factors affecting the same subject, when three out of the following five criteria are present: abdominal obesity, hypertriglyceridemia, low HDL cholesterol, hypertension, impaired glucose tolerance (or diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes). Recent studies on the association between the MetS, depression and anxiety have reported conflicting findings; yet, clinically they are very frequently present in the same patient.

Aim: To review findings supporting the opportunity of considering the presence of depressive/anxiety symptoms as the “sixth criterion” of the Metabolic Syndrome.

Methods: Systematic review. A Medline search of the literature conducted on September 12th, 2012 (key words: metabolic syndrome, anxiety, depression) provided 148 references. A further temporal-limit of the search, taking into account only papers published in the last five years, provided 90 references. Finally, 16 studies were retained eligible for the present study.

Results: Of 16 papers, 3 reported absolutely no association between MetS, depression and anxiety; 5 reported a significant correlation. As far as depression is concerned, 5 papers reported a correlation with MetS, 1 reported no correlation between MetS and the Major Depressive Disorder. As far as anxiety is concerned, 4 papers reported a significant correlation with MetS, 2 reported no correlation. The most reproducible finding was the correlation between anxious/depressive symptoms and the MetS (especially large waist circumference), when affecting women.

Conclusions: The presence of depression and/or anxiety could be considered the sixth criterion to diagnose the MetS in females with large waist circumference.