

Nowadays, there is a growing interest in issues related to proper nutrition and an increase in the number of people who pay attention to the quality of their meals. However, observance of the principles of proper nutrition may take extreme forms, such as orthorexia nervosa, i.e., pathological obsession with proper nutrition. People with symptoms of orthorexia nervosa eliminate from their diets food products which they perceive as unhealthy. Orthorexia nervosa is also connected with the belief that the consumed products influence the quality of life. A selective diet can lead to malnutrition and weight loss. In addition, problems with the digestive system, hormonal disorders, hypertension and heart disease can also be observed. Gradually, the quality of life is reduced and social isolation is observed. In addition, untreated orthorexia nervosa can even lead to death. Despite increasing interest, there is a lack of sufficient data on the development, symptoms, conditions and scale of orthorexia nervosa. Moreover, it has so far not been included in the classification of mental illness and disorders (DSM-5) as an independent disease entity due to the lack of solid empirical data required for proper diagnosis. Qualifying and diagnostic difficulties of orthorexia nervosa result from coexistence of symptoms of this disorder with other disease syndromes. Previous studies have mainly focused on psychosocial aspects of orthorexia nervosa, with little attention paid to diet and nutritional status. Moreover, in the light of the latest research, the most frequently used ORTO-15 questionnaire is not a satisfactory research tool, so there is a need to carry out work that will result in a better tool.

The scientific aim of the project is to estimate the occurrence of symptoms of orthorexia nervosa in a group of young people, and then to evaluate the nutritional behavior of people showing symptoms of orthorexia nervosa, characteristics of these people, including attitudes towards health and nutrition, satisfaction with their own bodies, nutritional knowledge and sociodemographic features. Moreover, the aim of the project is to develop a research tool to measure the symptoms of orthorexia nervosa and to validate it.

The study covers a group of 2100 people aged 16-35, including students of secondary schools located in Warsaw and students from eight universities located in five voivodships, i.e., Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Mazowieckie, Lubelskie and Małopolskie. The study will be conducted by means of an auditorium survey and the current quotation method, as well as by means of anthropometric methods.

The project includes 5 research tasks, i.e., 1/ Assessment of the occurrence of orthorexia nervosa symptoms in the group of people aged 18-35 and their relation to attitudes towards health, perception of one's own figure and field of study; 2/ Identification of patterns of nutritional behavior in the group of people aged 18-35 and their relation to the occurrence of orthorexia nervosa symptoms; 3/ Assessment of the relation between nutritional knowledge of people aged 18-35 and the occurrence of orthorexia nervosa symptoms in a dynamic perspective, i.e., at the beginning and at the end of the studies; 4/ Development of a research tool to measure the symptoms of orthorexia nervosa and its validation; and 5/ Evaluation of the diet and nutritional status of people aged 16-35, including the occurrence of orthorexia nervosa symptoms.

The project assumes obtaining the necessary information to supplement the existing knowledge on orthorexia nervosa, and its innovative character results primarily from the inclusion of nutritional behavior patterns not individual food products in the nutritional evaluation of people with symptoms of orthorexia nervosa; the use of panel examination, which allows to observe changes in the occurrence of orthorexia nervosa symptoms in nutritional behavior, which occur under the influence of nutritional knowledge gained during the course of studies; evaluation of diet and nutritional status of people with symptoms of orthorexia nervosa, especially the assessment of body composition. Comprehensive evaluation of the diet and nutritional status of the examined persons with simultaneous diagnosis of other parameters showing a connection with the occurrence of orthorexia nervosa symptoms, as well as development of a new tool for measuring symptoms of orthorexia nervosa will be an important contribution to the existing knowledge of the specificity of this disorder and research in this field.