Reviewer's report

Title: Emotional facial expression in women recovered from anorexia nervosa

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Reviewer: Giovanni Abbate-Daga

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The manuscript “emotional facial expression in women recovered from AN” compares three subgroups (49 AN; 21 recovered AN; 53 healthy controls) to assess whether – while watching movies – participants’ facial expressions differ significantly.

This paper shows some strengths. First, it aims in an original way to study aspects not directly related to eating psychopathology that can influence significantly both ED pathogenesis and maintenance. Second, the authors made a comparison with recovered patients: such a methodology can be useful to understand to what extent eventual deficits in emotional facial expression are linked to the disorder. Third, some important confounders like age, anxiety and depression are considered in statistical analysis.

However, some changes could be useful – particularly because this paper will be published on a special issue on treatment resistance.

Major Revisions

a) Recovered individuals show a duration of illness significantly lower than those who are currently ill. In the limitation section the authors highlight how recovered group could be a group originally less ill than those currently affected by the disorder. The authors could hypothesize that recovered individuals premorbidly showed less deficit in emotional facial expression. This could have been a positive factor as regards resistance to treatments.

b) Paragraph “experimental task”: it could be useful to clarify if the three movies were seen on the same day or not.

c) Data on looking away are interesting. Ill patients – differently from recovered – during the sad clip were significantly more avoidant. The issue of emotion avoidance in AN – as the authors discuss in their introduction – is well-known but some more comments on this datum could enrich the paper. For example, it could be speculated that working on emotion – especially when negative – avoidance can be a relevant factor as regards resistance.

d) Since the study is performed on clips, it could be useful an authors’ opinion on using movies in therapy or on cinematherapy itself; in fact these are therapies of growing interest in the last years because of several psychosocial factors.

Minor Revisions

e) Trivial note: page 4 last paragraph: maybe it could be more appropriate referring to remission rather than recovery for schizophrenic patients.
**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests