

MEETING ABSTRACT

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EHMTI-0180. Behavioural and alexithymic characteristics of adolescents suffering from chronic headache

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Introduction

Many studies have examined the association between paediatric headache and psychopathology; some of them raised the possibility that headache frequency and severity could be worsened by a reduced psychological ability to mentally process emotions and affects.

Aims

The first aim of this study was to assess psychopathological comorbidity in adolescents with chronic daily headache (CDH) compared to adolescents with non-chronic headache. The second aim was to investigate the possible role of alexithymia as a negative factor in adolescents with headache.

Methods

42 patients aged 11.0-17.11, consecutively seen for headache in our Headache Centre, and their 42 mothers were enrolled. They were assessed using Parent Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), Youth Self-report (YSR) and Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS). A detailed history was taken to assess the presence of headache, using criteria defined by ICDH-III beta.

Results

21 (50%) of our patients presented a form of CDH; they had at the YSR higher levels of Somatic Complaints ($P=0.006$), Thought Problems ($P=0.003$) and ADHD ($P=0.049$). At the CBCL, their mothers reported higher levels of Somatic Complaints ($P=0.045$) and lower Total Competences ($P=0.012$). Alexithymic patients showed more Social Problems ($P=0.039$), Thought Problems

($P=0.010$), Attention Deficit ($P=0.024$) and Affective Problems ($P=0.036$) compared to non-alexithymic patients.

Conclusions

This study confirmed that CDH are associated with a higher level of impairment and with a heavier psychopathological burden. It is possible that the presence of a significant degree of alexythymia in these patients could be associated to the worsening both of headache and of psychopathological aspects.

No conflict of interest.

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