

The added value of narratives for understanding adolescent's experiences with diabetes

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Introdução & objetivos: Evidence shows that living with diabetes during adolescence is a challenging experience (Commissariat, Kenowitz, Trast, Heptulla, & Gonzalez, 2016; Scholes et al., 2013). The association between illness perceptions and a range of physical and mental health outcomes have been demonstrated in a number of conditions including diabetes (Law, Tolgyesi, & Howard, 2014), therefore, it is important to comprehend how young people make sense of and manage their illness. The objectives were: (1) to describe illness perceptions of young people with IDDM; (2) to understand whether and in what ways, an in-depth analysis of the adolescent's narratives offers additional insight into their experience of living with IDDM.

Metodologia: This was a mixed-methods study. The sample was comprised by 32 adolescents with DM1, aged 12 to 18 years, from a pediatric endocrinology clinic in Porto. Participants completed the Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire (IPQ) and were also asked to write a text about "What is it like to have IDDM". The texts were explored through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Resultados e discussão: Scores from Brief IPQ show that adolescents perceived their illness as relatively nonthreatening. Narratives were analyzed with thematic analysis and illustrate how adolescents experience their disease, as well as, the strategies used to maintain and improve a sense of normalcy. The seven subthemes found express a process of negotiation between accepting the constraints imposed by the presence of the disease and the burden of its treatment and the desire/need to live a normal life. Significant associations between the scores for illness perceptions were found, as for example, adolescents who reported a higher understanding of their illness, evaluated the experience of having IDDM as less restrictive ($r = -0,445$; $p = 0.011$).

Conclusões: . The use of narratives was proved very informative of adolescent's experiences with diabetes, in addition to the evaluation of illness perceptions according to the Common Sense Model (Law et al., 2014). For clinical interventions aimed to promote adaptation of young people with diabetes, findings of this study address the need to focus on normalizing their lives, and to

promote more positive illness beliefs and coping strategies, for counterbalancing the restrictive impact that IDDM has on adolescent's lives.

Palavras-chave: *Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus; Adolescents; Illness beliefs; Narratives.*

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