

Illness perceptions in adolescents with Inflammatory Bowel Disease and association with distress and well-being

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Introdução & objetivos: Illness perceptions are cognitive constructs that each patient develops about his own disease and that are linked to disease-related behaviours and outcomes. Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is one of the most common chronic diseases that affect children and adolescents. It requires a lifelong medical treatment, as well as the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Despite the numerous studies about illness perceptions, little is known about illness perceptions of adolescents suffering from IBD. The goals of the present study were (1) to describe illness perceptions, distress and well-being of adolescents with IBD, and (2) to associate illness perceptions with distress and well-being of adolescents with IBD.

Metodologia: Thirty-six adolescents aged 12 to 18 ($M = 14.7$), diagnosed with IBD, recruited at paediatric gastroenterology outpatient services, answered the Illness Perception Questionnaire (Brief IPQ), and the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) questionnaire, assessing self-rated health, presence of physical and psychological symptoms, life satisfaction, perception of illness as an impairment, and self-rated happiness. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee.

Resultados e discussão: Overall, the disease is perceived as benign. Most adolescents are worried but they feel a reasonable self-control over their illness and that treatment could strongly help. Generally, adolescents showed positive perceptions of their health status and of their life. However, tiredness and exhaustion and nervousness were referred as frequent symptoms. Supporting previous studies, the most cited causes of illness were poor diet (38,9%), a controllable cause, but also unknown causes (27,8%) and genetics and heredity (22,2%). Significant correlations indicated that higher threatening perception of illness were associated with an increased frequency of physical symptoms, of tiredness and exhaustion, of depression and nervousness and with less satisfaction with life (*rs ranging from .331 to .587*). All descriptive and correlational results were significantly stronger in adolescents with active disease comparing to those in remission.

Conclusões: Negative illness perceptions will be reflected in distress and malaise of adolescents

with IBD. From the evaluation/comprehension of illness perceptions, it is possible to draw interventions to change negative perceptions and illness outcomes.

Palavras-chave: *Doença Inflamatória Intestinal; Adolescentes; Crenças de doença; Bem-estar.*

Keywords: *Inflammatory Bowel Disease; Adolescents; Illness beliefs; Well-being.*

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