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131. The Impact of Response to MTX on the Illness and Treatment Beliefs of Parents of Children with JIA

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Abstract

Background: Research on adult patients with chronic illness has shown that their illness beliefs are associated with patient reported outcomes. There is limited research focusing on the illness and treatment beliefs of parents of ill children. The aim of this study was to discern if treatment success, as measured by the ACR Pediatric (Ped) criteria has an impact upon parents' beliefs about their child's illness and treatment.

Methods: The data of 157 mothers and 75 fathers was used in this cross-sectional study. Parents were asked to complete a series of questionnaires including the Illness Perception Questionnaire-Revised (IPQ-R) and the Treatment Representation Inventory (TRI). Parents of children, who reached the ACR Ped 70 level of improvement in arthritis were compared to parents of non-responders using Chi-Square Tests and ANOVAs.

Results: A number of significant differences in parents' illness perceptions were found. Mothers of non-responders had a stronger belief in the unpredictable nature of the arthritis ($p = 0.01$) and mothers of ACR Ped 70 responders showed a stronger belief in their ability to control the arthritis ($p = 0.03$). Fathers of ACR Pediatric 70 responders had a stronger belief in their child's understanding of the arthritis ($p = 0.01$) and in the arthritis being an acute condition ($p = 0.03$). Only one significant difference was found in parents' treatment representations. Mothers of ACR Ped 70 responders had a stronger belief in the ability of the treatment to cure the arthritis. The means of the scale assessing the value of treatment were high for all mothers and fathers. Other treatment and illness beliefs were in the mid-range reflecting uncertain beliefs.

Conclusions: With the exception of mothers' beliefs in the ability of the treatment to cure the arthritis, no differences were found in the treatment beliefs between parents of ACR Ped 70 responders and parents of non-responders. This suggests that with exception of beliefs in cure, the treatment success is not generally reflected in parents' treatment beliefs. However, treatment success influenced a number of parents' beliefs about their child's illness. These differences were all in the expected direction. Notably, on a number of the scales mothers and fathers consistently showed a degree of uncertainty in their beliefs about their child's illness and treatment, regardless of treatment success. This uncertainty may reflect the fact that currently there is no cure for JIA. Illness uncertainty has been found to be positively associated with negative psychological outcomes in patients with chronic illness. The findings in this study suggest that parents of children with JIA may require additional support to deal with the uncertainty in relation to their child's illness and treatment.

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