

Adolescent Chronic Illness: A Qualitative Study of Psychosocial Adjustment

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Abstract

Introduction: The purpose of this study was to investigate the psychosocial issues facing young people living with a chronic medical condition. **Materials and Methods:** Subjects were young people with a range of medical conditions who were on a waiting list to participate in the Chronic Illness Peer Support programme at the Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia. Young people agreed to in-depth interviews which were taped and transcribed. Thematic analysis was undertaken by two researchers working independently. **Results:** Thirty-five young people were interviewed. Thematic analysis revealed five broad themes: control (in control, under control, out of control); emotional reactions (happiness, frustration, anger, sadness, anxiety); acceptance (of illness, of others, of self); coping strategies, and; a search for meaning. The importance of social connections was emphasised. While illustrating the difficulties of managing a chronic medical condition during adolescence, a generally positive message emerges about these young people. **Conclusions:** Many young people with chronic illness appear relatively resilient in the face of the adjustment challenges presented by their illness. Interventions that allow a young person to explore meaning, build self-esteem, and acceptance through positive social connections are likely to improve adjustment outcomes in this group.

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