

## POSTER

# RESILIENCE IN ADOLESCENT CHRONIC PAIN: AN EXPLORATION OF COPING MECHANISMS AND PROTECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescents living with Chronic Pain (CP) are vulnerable to negative outcomes such as disability and impaired quality of life; they often miss schools, are unable to maintain social contacts, have sleep disturbances, and suffer from anxiety and depression. The continuation of avoidance coping behaviour beyond normal healing time had also been shown to result in negative consequences such as Disuse Syndrome—a state associated with physical deconditioning, sick role behaviour, psychosocial withdrawal, as well as negative and catastrophic beliefs.

## **OBJECTIVE**

This study uses an interpretative phenomenological approach to explore individual positive thought processes, adaptation efforts, coping mechanisms, as well as resilience resources (beneficial social situations and solid family ties) that adolescents adopt to minimize the impact of pain and its consequences. The ultimate goal is to liaise with fellow physicians, allied researchers, and policy makers to modify, adapt, and improve current adolescent CP services. This way, we can help patients foster skills that will allow them to adapt positively, regain a balanced social life, and live successfully despite their pain.

## **RESULTS / FINDINGS**

Central to all accounts is a sense of interrupted life—phrases with negative connotations such as “couldn’t do” and “had to stop” are repeatedly used to express feelings of loss of control.

To regain control over their situation, participants create within themselves a positive internal dialogue: they reconstruct the meaning of normalcy, practice acceptance, make downward social comparisons, and engage in daily positive affirmations. While chronic pain disrupts their career trajectories, the experience of living with pain has instilled in them the pursuit of significance. This pursuit is propelled by the imagery of a full life and seems to be particular to this age group. Ironically, some participants are seen to be grateful for their pain. Living with pain has gifted them with intuitive empathy for the suffering of others, as well as the emotional credibility to help. ■