ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN PAIN AND DISTRESS IN CHILDREN: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION / AIM

Pain is associated with distress and can have a negative impact on child development and quality of life. The aim of the present study was to systematically review the recent literature and analyze associations between pain and distress in children.

METHODS

Databases: The systematic review was based on the PRISMA statement and performed by selecting articles that are indexed in scientific databases. The keywords that were used for the search were the following: Pain and Stress and Distress and Behavior and Development. Data Treatment: The methodological quality of the articles was examined using the following methodological instruments: STROBE statement for observational studies and CONSORT statement for randomized clinical trials. The PedIMMPACT Consensus was used to evaluate the psychometric quality of pain and distress instruments.

RESULTS

We analyzed 23 empirical studies, including 14 randomized controlled trials, seven cross-sectional studies, and two studies with cohort designs. Fourteen studies included preschool and school children, and nine studies included infants. Acute pain was assessed in 20 studies, and chronic pain was the focus of three studies. All of the studies conformed with at least 60% of the items that were specified by the methodological instruments, indicating good quality of the studies that were reviewed herein. All of the pain outcomes included measures of validity that were classified as well-established by the PedIMMPACT Consensus. Most of the studies used physiological (n = 12) and behavioral (n = 8) measures as the distress outcome.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

The present systematic review provides evidence of distress-associated pain, which may contribute to better care for infants and children who experience painful conditions.

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