FRIENDSHIPS OF TEENS WITH CHRONIC PAIN: HOW DO THEY COMPARE WITH FRIENDSHIPS OF HEALTHY TEENS.

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INTRODUCTION / AIM

To determine characteristics of friendship dyads of teens with chronic pain compared to healthy teens friendship dyads. Teens with chronic pain identify friendship challenges. Previous studies have not captured friendship dyad data therefore we do not know if there are dyadic differences that contribute to friendship challenges.

METHODS

A lab based experimental observational multisite study is underway. Here we report on the standardized measures capturing friendship factors, internalizing behaviors, school attendance, and demographics involving 86 teens (43 dyads; 23 healthy dyads).

RESULTS

Interclass correlations within dyads were not highly correlated, allowing for comparisons across 4 groups (teen with pain; friend of teen with pain; healthy control teen; friend of healthy control teen). No significant differences were found on friendship measures. MANCOVA predicted internalizing behavior scores based on group membership after controlling for quality of friendships, sex, and age. Teens with chronic pain were significantly lonelier than the other groups (38.42 +/- 12.63; p=.005). No differences were found between teens with chronic pain and their friends on social anxiety or self-esteem. However, teens with chronic pain, but not their friends, scored significantly higher on social anxiety and lower on self-esteem compared to healthy controls. Teens with chronic pain missed significantly more school days (6.17; +/- 5.46; p=.000) per month compared to other groups.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

Teens with chronic pain who have a friend willing to participate in a lab based study score similarly to controls on friendship measures. However, these teens experience more loneliness, which may be related to missing out on typical friendship activities (i.e. school). Determining ways to keep them engaged and active with their friends may improve feelings of loneliness.

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