

J McBeth et al. Journal of Rheumatology. October (2001) Vol. 28 #10 p 2305.

It is consistently found that people who complain of chronic regional pain, such as DRSP, upon questioning turn out to have similar pains in many other parts of the body. Chronic widespread pain (CWP) is common and of unknown origin. Poor mental health is known to be partially predictive among adults, on a five-year time scale, as is severe regional pain.

This study seeks to examine a hypothetical link between CWP in adults and adverse events in their childhood.

Cross sectional screening survey of 1953 people registered at one GP practice, aged 18 to 65.

Inclusion criteria: pain in previous month, if it lasted more than 24 hours.

Anyone with such a pain history and GHQ ≥ 2 was given a follow-up detailed evaluation: assessor was blinded to pain status.

Childhood experiences interview.

Randomisation to avoid selection bias.

1953 represents 75% of all those asked about pain and who completed GHQ12.

57% of the detailed interview people agreed to go ahead.

Some evidence of recall bias, CWP people had gloomier health recollections than did controls. These recollections were often gloomier than could be objectively verified from GP notes. Other recollections could not be validated.

Illness in childhood, illness in family members, parental loss, operations and abuse were not found to be statistically significantly associated with CWP.

Hospitalisation was significantly associated: OR = 4.8 (95% CI = 1.3 to 18.1) but the wide confidence interval casts doubt on the value of this finding.

Comment

This result is at odds with findings (mainly from USA) which find strong links between CWP and child sex abuse. The finding counts against the examination of life histories in the search for causes of CWP.

This was a relatively good study.

