ADOLESCENT ILLNESS PERCEPTIONS AND ADHERENCE IN TYPE 1 DIABETES: THE ROLE OF MATERNAL INVOLVEMENT

Diabetes patients show poor adherence during the adolescent years due, in part, to the reduced involvement of parents in diabetes management. Illness perceptions (e.g., perceptions that one has control over illness; perceptions that treatment is effective) are also important predictors of medical adherence, but it is not clear whether the influence of illness perceptions changes as children mature and develop independent illness management skills. We explored how adolescent's diabetes perceptions relate to adherence as a function of their mother's level of involvement in diabetes management. Eighty-three adolescents with type 1 diabetes (11 to 17 years old; illness duration > 2 years) and their mothers completed self-report measures of adherence, illness perceptions, and perceived maternal involvement. Not surprisingly, children who perceived their diabetes as controllable displayed better adherence, while children with less involved mothers reported poorer adherence (p < .05). We also found that children's illness perceptions interacted marginally with maternal involvement to predict adherence (p < .08). Children's illness perceptions tended to be more strongly associated with adherence when mothers were highly involved in their diabetes management. Lack of maternal involvement appears detrimental for adherence even when children have adaptive illness perceptions.