



**IXth European
Conference on
Developmental
Psychology**

Island of Spetses, Greece • September 1-5, 1999

**Human Development
at the Turn of the Century**

PROGRAMME

Under the aegis of the European Society for Developmental Psychology

COPING AND CHRONIC ILLNESS IN ADOLESCENTS FROM A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Co-convenors

Meijer, S.*, & Skinner, C.**

* *University Hospital for Children & Youth, Utrecht, The Netherlands*

** *University Hospital Lewisham, London, UK*

Discussant

Bijstra, J.

University of Groningen, The Netherlands

An essential theme in developmental psychology is the concept of coping. For a successful completion of the many developmental tasks that adolescents are faced with, adequate coping strategies are required. Thus, coping is an essential aspect within the developmental process. This developmental process may be affected when adolescents are confronted with a non-normative event, such as a chronic illness. How the presence of a chronic illness interacts with the developmental process will be the focus of this symposium.

First, Dr. Meijer will describe coping strategies that are used by adolescents with a variety of chronic illnesses in relation to their social functioning. Next, Prof. Tap will discuss the impact of chronic disease on several developmental tasks in adolescents with cancer, including coping strategies. Further, Dr. Skinner will call attention to the influence of the adolescents' social environment on their coping with diabetes, as well as the mediating influence of coping on daily behaviour and well-being. Finally, Prof. Seiffge-Krenke will explore whether chronic illness causes delays in the perceived develop-

mental status of adolescents with diabetes. She will discuss the difficulty of balancing normative development with the demand of chronic illness.

Coping as a predictor of social functioning in adolescents with a chronic illness

Meijer, S., & Sinnema, G.

University Hospital for Children & Youth, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Psychological impact of cancer in adolescence: Anxiety, self-esteem, coping strategies and projects

Sordes-Ader, F., & Tap, P.

University Toulouse II-"le Mirail", France

Social support and personal models of diabetes as predictors of self-care and well-being

Skinner, T. C., & Hampson, S. E.

University Hospital Lewisham, London, UK

Chronic disease and perceived developmental progression in adolescence

Seiffge-Krenke, I.

University of Mainz, Germany



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ABSTRACTS

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COPING AND CHRONIC ILLNESS IN ADOLESCENTS FROM A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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First, Dr. Meijer will describe coping strategies that are used by adolescents with a variety of chronic illnesses in relation to their social functioning. Next, Prof. Tap will discuss the impact of chronic disease on several developmental tasks in adolescents with cancer, including coping strategies. Further, Dr. Skinner will pay attention to the influence of the adolescents' social environment on their coping with diabetes, as well as the mediating influence of coping on dietary behaviour and well-being. Finally, Prof. Seiffge-Krenke will explore whether chronic illness causes delays in the perceived developmental status of adolescents with diabetes. She will discuss the difficulty of balancing normative development with the demand of chronic illness.

Coping as a predictor of social functioning in adolescents with a chronic illness

Meijer, S., & Sinnema, G.

University Hospital for Children & Youth, Utrecht, The Netherlands

This study examines the association between coping strategies and social functioning in adolescents with a chronic illness. Self-reported coping was assessed in 84 adolescents of 13-16 years old with a chronic illness (asthma, cystic fibrosis, juvenile chronic arthritis, and constitutional eczema). A distinction was made between functional coping strategies (confrontation and seeking social support) and dysfunctional coping strategies (depressive reactions and avoidance). In addition, several social functioning assessments were completed: Social activities, social self-esteem, social anxiety and social skills. Linear regression analyses were performed to predict the various aspects of social functioning. Results show that coping significantly predicts social functioning: Functional coping strategies are predictors of adequate social skills, while dysfunctional coping strategies are predictors of social anxiety and inadequate social skills. However, the level of social activities was not related to coping strategies.

Psychological impact of cancer in adolescence: Anxiety, selfesteem, coping strategies and projects

Sordes-Ader, F., & Tap, P.

University Toulouse II-"le Mirail", France

Prolonged life expectancy associated with many types of lifethreatening paediatric disease has brought about increased focus upon the relationship between chronic disease and psychological functioning. Data in this regard have been equivocal: Some authors suggest inevitable psychological maladjustment associated with a variety of chronic disorders, whereas others have found no such evidence. In the present study, an attempt was made to obtain information about the relationship between serious disease in adolescence and different areas of psychological functioning. Indeed, we'll put the stress on the intensity of emotions faced with cancer, on selfesteem, on the temporal aspect linked to the threat (of

death?) and also on the course of action to take to face the problem. 51 adolescents suffering from cancer were compared with 51 healthy adolescents (14-20 years). The impact of the disease is evaluated by means of questionnaires on anxiety, self-esteem, temporal horizon and plans, and coping strategies. Contrary to what we had expected, we found weaker anxiety and stronger self-esteem with sick adolescents. Plans for the future, and occupational plans have been maintained in spite of the uncertainty bound up with this illness. Furthermore, sick adolescents control the situation inducing emotion more often, yet they refuse it too, more often than healthy adolescents. These results have led us to conclude that illness doesn't alienate the adolescent who is suffering from it. He will be inclined to wish to get through that situation and to try to transcend it.

Social support and personal models of diabetes as predictors of self-care and well-being

Skinner, T. C., & Hampson, S. E.

University Hospital Lewisham, London, UK

This study sets out to examine whether peer support and illness representation mediates the link between family support, self-management and well-being. Fifty four adolescents (12-18) with Type I diabetes were recruited and followed over 6 months, completing assessments of self-management, well-being and social support. Perceived impact of diabetes and supportive family and friends were prospectively predictive of participants' well-being measures. Although support from family and friends was predictive of better dietary self-care, this relationship was mediated by personal model beliefs. In particular, beliefs about the effectiveness of the diabetes treatment regimen to control diabetes was predictive of better dietary self-care. Both friends and family are important to support adolescents as they live with and manage their diabetes. Personal models of diabetes are important determinants of both dietary self-care and well-being. In addition, personal models may serve to mediate the relationship between social support and dietary behaviour.

Chronic disease and perceived developmental progression in adolescence

Seiffge-Krenke, I.

University of Mainz, Germany

The study examines whether chronic illness causes delays in adolescents' perceived developmental status. Longitudinal data were obtained from 86 adolescents with IDDM (insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus) and 103 healthy adolescents. The adolescents annually completed a questionnaire pertaining to their current developmental status in eleven age-specific developmental tasks. Health status and physical maturity were also determined. In the first year of the study, the diabetics reported delays relative to their healthy peers in some developmental tasks, particularly physical maturity and an independent life style. However, the overall developmental progression perceived by chronically ill adolescents was impressive. The difficulty of balancing normative development with the demands of chronic illness is discussed.