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Teachers' Perceptions of and Responses to Adolescents with Chronic Pain Syndromes

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▶ Abstract

Objective To examine factors that influence teachers' perceptions of and responses to chronic pain in students.

Methods Two-hundred and sixty classroom teachers responded to a vignette describing a student with limb pain. The 2x2x2 factorial design included conditions that varied by (a) the presence or absence of documented organic evidence for the pain, (b) cooperative vs. confrontational parent-teacher interactions, and (c) the presence or absence of communication from the medical team. Teachers rated pain severity and impairment, relief from classroom responsibilities, extent of accommodations the student would require in school, and sympathy for the student and family. **Results**

Documented medical evidence supporting the pain was the most influential factor affecting teachers' responses to pain. Parental attitude also influenced responses. Communication from the medical team influenced teachers' decisions about relief from responsibilities but did not affect other reactions. **Conclusions** Teachers' responses to students with pain are influenced by situational factors. Efforts to increase school functioning in youth with chronic pain should incorporate attempts to help teachers respond to pain adaptively.

Key words: adolescent; chronic pain; classroom; school functioning; teacher report.

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