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Fibromyalgia: The Early Years. Symptoms in Childhood Before the Diagnosis

Author Block: Robert S. Katz¹, Sharon Ferbert², Frank Leavitt³. ¹Rheumatology Associates, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, IL; ²AFFTER Fibromyalgia Organization, Chicago, IL; ³Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, IL

Abstract:

METHODS: An Internet survey, conducted by a FMS community organization, AFFTER (Advocates for Fibromyalgia Funding, Treatment, Education and Research), asked respondents about 7 different childhood symptoms. 463 women with FMS and 75 women without FMS completed the questionnaire. The FMS and non-FMS groups were compared with respect to the percentage reporting having had each symptom using the chi-square test of association, and with respect to the number of reported symptoms using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test. A 0.05 significance level was used. All tests were two-sided.

RESULTS: Women with FMS were significantly more likely than women without FMS to report 6 of the 7 childhood symptoms. For women who reported at least 1 symptom, the FMS group reported significantly more symptoms than the non-FMS group (3 ± 2 versus 2 ± 1).

Symptom	FMS n (%)	Non-FMS n (%)	P-value
Growing Pains	227(49%)	16(21%)	< 0.001
Unusual Illness	109(24%)	6(8%)	0.002
Chronic Infections	181(39%)	8(11%)	< 0.001
Stomach Aches	175(38%)	19(25%)	0.037
Headaches	216(47%)	19(25%)	0.001
Sleep Disturbances	155(33%)	5(7%)	< 0.001
None	64(14%)	30(40%)	< 0.001
Number of Symptoms*	FMS n (%)	Non-FMS n (%)	P-value
1	70(20%)	11(34%)	< 0.001
2	82(21%)	16(47%)	

3	91(23%)	1(3%)	
4	54(14%)	5(16%)	
5	47(12%)	0(0%)	
6	25(6%)	0(0%)	
7	12(3%)	0(0%)	

*For women who reported at least 1 symptom

CONCLUSION: Women with FMS recall experiencing a wider variety of symptoms in childhood than women without FMS. This may mean that an excess of childhood illness or certain symptoms are risk factors for the development of FMS later in life. Prospective studies in children may help determine which individuals are more susceptible to developing fibromyalgia. .

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