Introduction and objectives

- Emotional and behavioural problems are often used in support of GnRH agonist therapy in girls with early pubertal timing.
- However, there is little evidence to show that ICPP leads to psychological distress and whether treatment is associated with improved psychological outcome.
- The objective of this qualitative study was to explore the psychosocial impact of ICPP in recently diagnosed girls.

Methods

- 27 girls and their parents were included in this study.
- Interviews were thematically analysed by an anthropologist and an endocrinologist.
- 3 main themes emerged from the analysis describing:
  - body changes
  - relationship with family members and peers
  - understanding of the condition and its treatment

Results

Main characteristics of the patients at inclusion in the study

| Age at inclusion in the study (yrs) | 8.1 (7.5-8.5) |
| Age at B2 (yrs) | 7.0 (6.0-7.0) |
| Height (SDS) | +2.7 (2.3-3.3) |
| BMI (SDS) | +1.0 (0.3-2.4) |
| B2/ B3 | 9(30%)/ 21(70%) |
| PH 1/ PH2/ PH3 | 5(16.7%)/ 12(40%)/ 13(43%) |
| Periods: Yes/ No | 1(3.3%)/ 29(96%) |
| LH peak (UI/l) | 11.7(6.9-24.2) |
| Estradiol (pg/ml) | 9.0 (5.0-12.0) |
| Uterine length (mm) | 40 (37-45) |

Body changes

Breast development

- Girls
  - Teasing
    - "The girls, they said ‘You’ve got breasts! You’ve got breasts’ all day long. All day long!’" (Isabelle, age 7)
  - More positive experiences with breast development distinguishing them from their peers socially
    - "And sometimes we play mummies and daddies, and I’m the mummy, because I’ve got breasts and the others, they haven’t." (Mélanie, age 8)
- Mothers and fathers
  - Feeling of fear and anxiety about other people’s views or due to the image of femininity conveyed by their daughter’s breasts
    - "Not people in general, but maybe a man who scares too much. That might disturb me, yes." (mother of Léonore)

Menses

- Girls
  - Did not raise the issue of their menses
  - Did not worry about having to manage their first period at school
- Mothers
  - Often worried about when their daughters’ periods would start
    - "Since they diagnosed this precocious puberty, I worry all the time. I keep wondering whether her periods will start tomorrow, or next week.” (mother of Léonore)
  - A link between this event and sexuality, or even the possibility of pregnancy
    - "You can’t think about periods without thinking about pregnancy, so yes, she will become sexual, but, nevertheless, she’s a little girl, she could easily be taken advantage of." (mother of Léonore)

Relationship with family members and peers

- Confictual mother-daughter relationships
  - "It’s like I’ve got an adolescent in the house, but she’s not an adolescent, she’s an eight-year-old girl” (mother of Marie S).
- Closer mother-daughter relationships, leading fathers to retreat into the background
  - Perfect little girls with an exemplary attitude at home
  - No change in class linked to ICPP, except in one child, who had a conflictual relationship with the teacher
  - No patient described as being isolated at school or outside school

Understanding of the condition and its treatment

- "Something normal" happening too early and too fast.
- Or a "real disease" requiring regular follow-up at the hospital.
- Scared of needles and pain
  - "I prefer not to take it, at least like that it scares me less, I’m less stressed by it" (Isabelle, age 7).
- Social benefits that treatment could provide
  - "So that people stop saying things about me and, like that, I would be just like all the other little girls" (Awa, age 8).
- One child even agreed to treatment with the aim of reassuring her mother
  - “Otherwise, afterwards, I want it to stop and for mum to be relieved that I...that it’s been stopped” (Mélanie, age 8)

Conclusion

- Emotions varied widely among ICPP girls and their parents.
- Thus, considering emotions to justify treatment is hazardous.
- These data will allow the creation of a quantitative tool to assess the psychosocial functioning of patients and families.
- Such an instrument is needed to improve decision making on treatment in this context.

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