

Fibromyalgia: How is His Impact on Family Life?

Rodríguez Pérez M*

Faculty of Biochemistry and Environmental Sciences, Spain

*Corresponding author: Rodríguez-Pérez M, Faculty of Biochemistry and Environmental Sciences, Biochemistry Section, University of Castilla-La Mancha, Avda. Carlos III S/N. 45071, Toledo, Spain



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ABSTRACT

Fibromyalgia, like other health problems that occur with chronic pain, can produce different consequences in the life of the person who suffers from it, as well as in its closest environment. In this mini review, a general approach is made to focus on the impact on family life when the disease appears. However, we must clarify that the consequences described are not an inevitable fact or necessarily linked to the illness. Heterogeneity is a proven fact among people who share this diagnosis and therefore, the consequences too.

Keywords: Fibromyalgia; Chronic Pain; Family Impact; Quality Of Life

Mini Review

Fibromyalgia (FM) is a chronic pathology of pain state accompanied by various nonspecific symptoms, being considered as a mixture of psychological, physical and social disorders which mainly affects women [1-3]. In 1990, the American College of Rheumatology established that two conditions are needed to identify FM: diffuse musculoskeletal pain, for at least 3 months and, at least, pain in 11 of 18 predetermined body sites called tender points [1]. Many revisions of the criteria have been made since then, the last one in 2016. These most recent criteria confirm that other clinical variables should be considered [4]. Furthermore, FM presents a large degree of comorbid conditions like anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and painful, with diverse origins, like headache [5]. Due to that, many treatments have been tested to relieve the pain and recently, it has been shown that both yoga and mindfulness can improve the quality of sleep and decrease pain of FM patients [6,7]. However, the origin of the FM is not completely clear and for that reason, there is many investigations based on it.

Family Impact

An study of Collado et al. in 2014 made in Spain [8] affirms that the patients with FM present a 23% of mild/moderate family dysfunction and 8% severe family dysfunction. Furthermore, 23% of patients were scarcely satisfied or not satisfied at all with their family life, meanwhile 59% reported difficulties in their

relationship with their partner. There was a 17% of patients who divorced and, a half of them, thought that the FM had influenced on it. It should not be forgotten that if there are children, they need to be aware of the fact that their mothers are no more completely self-sufficient, with the great impact caused on them and of course in the patient, who mostly will be the mother [9]. Collado, et al. [8] also confirm that 45% of the FM patients of that study said that their family did not understand the disease and they did not follow the doctors' recommendations.

Moreover, it is important to consider role changes when a woman is diagnosed with FM, since a redistribution of tasks must occur with the difficulties that it can cause to family balance. At the beginning of the disease, women try to continue with all the housework, but they quickly realize that they must stop, leading to this fact the loss of the role they traditionally have [9]. It is also described that the disease is often associated with an employment status change and loss of ability to work, due to the fact that in many cases, the patients do not inform their work environment about their disease for fear of losing the job [8]. Another point to consider are the problems related to marital relationships, since on the one hand, patients' partners make plans outside home with other people which can not include them and on the other hand, different difficulties appear in sexual relations due to, among other facts, sexual stiffness and body image disorders [9,10].

Conclusion

As a conclusion, it could be said that the real impact of FM on family life of the patients is very complicated and complex to establish. One of the principal causes may be the fact that many people are undiagnosed and until they are correctly diagnosed, not only suffer episodes of pain but also misunderstanding. It is crucial to continue researching in this syndrome in order to improve both the diagnosis and the quality of life of the FM patients.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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