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Cystic Fibrosis: Support Networks Help Patients Lead Normal Lives

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Cystic Fibrosis: Support Networks Help Patients Lead Normal Lives

Brandon Vestal Mentor: Robert Wilson, Ph.D.

Introduction:

- Cystic Fibrosis (CF): Incurable genetic disorder, not contagious.
- More than 70,000 patients worldwide, with around 1,000 new cases diagnosed per year.
- Treatments are usually invasive and time-consuming.
- Thesis: Support from family, peers, and doctors allows child and adolescent CF patients to lead relatively normal lives.



Chest oscillations are a common treatment for CF.

Methods:

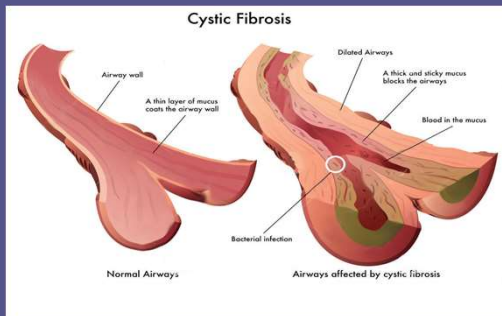
- Scholarly articles compiled into a review.
- Primarily interviews with child and adolescent CF patients, including Tuchman et al., “Transition to adult care: experiences and expectations of adolescents with a chronic illness.”

Research Findings:

- Lack of contagion causes fear to be directed towards individual well-being; peers more willing to provide support.
- Time-consuming treatments lead to self-consciousness in children.
- Online forums allow sharing of personal struggles with peers.
- Pediatric treatments can hamper independence.
- Doctors often emphasize transition to adult care early.

Conclusions:

- Conversing with their peers significantly improves the self-esteem and social well-being of child patients.
- Information from doctors allows adolescents to take responsibility for their own care.
- Reduces social pressure, eases already difficult transition to adulthood.
- Allows achievement of a relatively normal quality of life.



Left untreated, airways become clogged with viscous fluid.



Social support leads to increases in CF patient confidence, allowing life goals to be achieved.