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.

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.

Chest oscillations are a common treatment for CF.

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