# **MEETING ABSTRACT**

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# EHMTI-0180. Behavioural and alexithymic characteristics of adolescents suffering from chronic headache

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# Introduction

Many studies have examined the association between paediatric headache and psychopathology; some of them raised the possibility that headache frequency and severity could be worsened by a reduced psychological ability to mentally process emotions and affects.

### **Aims**

The first aim of this study was to assess psychopathological comorbidity in adolescents with chronic daily headache (CDH) compared to adolescents with non-chronic headache. The second aim was to investigate the possible role of alexithymia as a negative factor in adolescents with headache.

### **Methods**

42 patients aged 11.0-17.11, consecutively seen for headache in our Headache Centre, and their 42 mothers were enrolled. They were assessed using Parent Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), Youth Self-report (YSR) and Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS). A detailed history was taken to assess the presence of headache, using criteria defined by ICDH-III beta.

### Results

21 (50%) of our patients presented a form of CDH; they had at the YSR higher levels of Somatic Complaints (P=0.006), Thought Problems (P=0.003) and ADHD (P=0.049). At the CBCL, their mothers reported higher levels of Somatic Complaints (P=0.045) and lower Total Competences (P=0.012). Alexithymic patients showed more Social Problems (P=0.039), Thought Problems

(P=0.010), Attention Deficit (P=0.024) and Affective Problems (P=0.036) compared to non-alexithymic patients.

### **Conclusions**

This study confirmed that CDH are associated with a higher level of impairment and with a heavier psychopathological burden. It is possible that the presence of a significant degree of alexythimia in these patients could be associated to the worsening both of headache and of psychopathological aspects.

No conflict of interest.

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