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Overt and Relational Victimization Among Children with Frequent Abdominal Pain: Links to Social Skills, Academic Functioning, and Health Service Use

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▶ Abstract

Objectives Chronic abdominal pain is linked with school absenteeism and diminished social competence; yet, little is known about the extent to which negative peer encounters contribute to symptoms and functioning in youth with abdominal pain. This study compared children with frequent abdominal pain with a pain-free control group on measures of overt and relational victimization and examined the link between abdominal pain and school-related functioning. **Methods** Participants were 60 children with frequent abdominal pain and 60 gender- and age-matched peers. Child, peer, and teacher reports were used to assess abdominal pain, peer victimization, use of school medical services, social skills, and

academic competence. **Results** Children with frequent abdominal pain experienced higher levels of victimization than their pain-free peers, with boys in the pain group rated highest in overt victimization. For children in the pain group, overt and relational victimization made incremental contributions to outcomes and moderated the link between pain- and school-related functioning. **Conclusions** Overt and relational victimization may increase risk of concurrent adjustment problems among youth with frequent abdominal pain; thus, it may be useful to assess peer relationships when working with this population.

Key words: abdominal pain; overt victimization; peer relationships; relational victimization.

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