

Oxford Journals > Medicine > Journal of Pediatric Psychology > Volume 31, Number 10 > Pp. 1057-1071

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**Journal of Pediatric Psychology Advance Access originally published online on November 6, 2006**

Journal of Pediatric Psychology 2006 31(10):1057-1071; doi:10.1093/jpepsy/jsj011

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## Predictors of Parenting Behavior Trajectories Among Families of Young Adolescents with and without Spina Bifida

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**Objective** To evaluate the utility of familial and parental variables in predicting trajectories of parenting behaviors among families of young adolescents with and without spina bifida (SB). **Method** Sixty-eight families with a child with SB and a demographically matched comparison group (CG) of 68 families of an able-bodied child participated. Observational and questionnaire assessments of parenting behavior were collected via home visits at three time points, as were reports of parent and family functioning. **Results** Family conflict was negatively associated with adaptive parenting behavior at Time 1 (T1), but positively associated with adaptive parenting change. Although the direction of this effect was the same across both groups, findings were more robust for the SB sample. Among fathers of children with SB, parenting stress was positively associated with adaptive parenting at T1 but negatively associated with adaptive parenting change. In contrast, within the CG, paternal parenting stress was negatively associated with adaptive parenting at T1 but showed no enduring negative effects in longitudinal analyses. **Conclusions** Family conflict and parenting stress were significant predictors of parenting behaviors and longitudinal parenting change. Findings are interpreted within a developmental context such that variables associated with maladaptive (or adaptive) parenting in the short run, may facilitate adaptive (or maladaptive) parenting over time based on young adolescents' changing developmental needs.

**Key words:** adolescence; chronic illness; family; parenting; spina bifida.

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Online ISSN 1465-735X - Print ISSN 0146-8693

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