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Mother and Adolescent Representations of Illness Ownership and Stressful Events Surrounding Diabetes

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Objective To assess the extent to which adolescents with diabetes and their mothers appraise diabetes as a shared entity across adolescence through (a) assessing appraisals of illness ownership and their relationship to joint responsibility for daily diabetes tasks, (b) exploring whether appraisals of shared illness ownership are associated with congruent views of what is stressful about diabetes, and (c) examining whether age-related declines occur in these shared appraisals across adolescence. **Methods** One hundred twenty-seven adolescents (ages 10–15 years, $M = 12.8$) and their mothers completed an interview that probed appraisals of illness ownership, the most stressful events surrounding diabetes in the past week, and a questionnaire regarding who was responsible for performing diabetes-related tasks. **Results** Dyads, most frequently, agreed that diabetes was a "shared" entity. Shared appraisals of illness ownership reflected the greater joint responsibility of mothers and children in daily diabetes tasks. Shared appraisals of illness ownership were not related to congruent reports of diabetes stressful events, and incongruence in appraisals of stressful events was common. With age adolescents reported less shared illness ownership and congruence regarding stressful events, age differences were not seen in mothers' reports. **Conclusions** Although diabetes is often appraised as a social entity, adolescents and their mothers experience different aspects of the disease as stressful, especially as adolescents age, and become more independent in performing diabetes-related tasks.

Key words: adolescent illness; congruence; dyadic coping; stress; type 1 diabetes.

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