

THE ASSESSMENT OF FATIGUE IN CHILDREN WITH PAIN

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Fatigue is a subjective experience. It has been conceptualized as extreme tiredness, weakness or exhaustion, mental, physical or both. High levels of fatigue result in high levels of functional impairment and disability, and these problems are more notable if fatigue co-occurs with other conditions like psychological diseases or pain.

The objective our paper is to review available options for the assessment of fatigue in children with pain, and provide insights into what are the best alternatives for such an assessment. Specifically, we will systematically review the literature to (1) identify all the questionnaires that have been used to measure fatigue in children, focusing in those that assess fatigue in children with rheumatic conditions; and to (2) evaluate, compare and report the psychometric properties of those questionnaires when used with those children.

METHODS

PsycInfo, MEDLINE, CINAHL, ERIC, Scopus and the Cochrane Library databases were searched from their inception to January 2013.

The terms used for the initial search were the following: fatigue AND (child* OR ped* OR adolescent) AND (questionnaire OR instrument OR scale OR checklist OR assess* OR measure*) AND pain.

RESULTS

Our search identified 10 fatigue-related measures that had been used in children and adolescents with or without chronic pain.

Five of them had been used to assess fatigue in children with chronic pain-related problems but only two have reported psychometric properties in this sample: the Child Fatigue Scale (CFS) and the PedsQL Multidimensional Fatigue Scale.

Measure	Authors	Number of items	Population age	Target population	Psychometric properties in children with pain	EBA criteria
The Child Fatigue Scale (CFS)	Ward et al., 2008	14	6 – 11	Juvenile Rheumatic Arthritis	High internal consistency ($\alpha = .72 - .98$)	Promising for use in children with pain
PedsQL Multidimensional Fatigue Scale	Varni et al, 2004	18	2 – 18	Pediatric rheumatology	High internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$) Construct Validity	Approaching well-established criteria to be used in children with pain
	Varni et al, 2007		2 – 18	Fibromyalgia	High internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$) Construct Validity	
	Gold, 2009		8 – 18	Chronic pain	----	
	Butbul et al., 2011		8 – 16	Juvenile idiopathic arthritis Juvenile dermatomyositis	----	
	Ringold et al, 2009		7 – 18	Polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis	----	
Stephens et al., 2008	8 – 18	Fibromyalgia	----			

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that there is a need for new, better developed, theoretically driven and psychometrically sound measures to assess fatigue in children and adolescents with chronic pain.

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