PII-6: Adolescents’ Quality of Life after Heart Transplant

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Abstract:
Introduction: The purpose of this study was to explore the quality of life QOL of adolescents who have undergone heart transplant (HT). Though medical morbidity associated with HT is well described, psychosocial outcomes and QOL have received less attention. Therefore, the
specific aims of this study are to: 1) describe the adolescent’s perceptions of his or her QOL post HT and 2) to identify key elements that they perceive as impacting their QOL.

**Method(s):** Semi-structured qualitative interviews permitted examination of QOL from the subjective perspective of participants. The investigator used purposive sampling to recruit adolescents from a HT clinic in the southern U.S. Adolescents were 13-21 years of age and at least 6 months post most recent HT procedure. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Ethnograph was used to assist with data management and data were analyzed using constant comparison.

**Results:** Fourteen adolescents (8 females, 6 males) of diverse ethnic backgrounds participated in the study. Their average age was 17 years and the average time post HT was 8 years. The adolescents described their QOL as good, but reported that “everything changed” after HT. The adolescents identified “normal kid stuff” such as activities and social interactions as most important to their QOL. Changes in appearance, including scars and hirsutism, were very difficult for them, particularly the females. They had difficulties with the medications over and above disfiguring side effects including that they perceived that their immunosuppressants made them feel bad and they did not like taking them every day. Though they were grateful for the transplant, they resisted being defined by their medical condition.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Though the adolescents described their QOL as good, key areas of concern that impact their QOL were identified including appearance changes, side effects of medications, and being defined by the transplant. Interventions are needed that help adolescents cope with the side effects and social stigma of their medical condition and maximize opportunities for “normal kid stuff.”

**Abstract History:**
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