

FATHER, MY BELLY HURTS!

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Introduction: The concept of psychosomatic family, introduced by Minuchin, refers to some family organizations that maintain and reinforce psychosomatic symptoms in their members. The literature indicates that some family factors may lead to the emergence of somatic symptoms in a child or adolescent.

Objectives: The main objective of this study is the case report of an adolescent with recurrent abdominal pain and its integration in the existing literature.

Case report: A 14 year old girl presented to the emergency department (ED) with recurrent abdominal pain. She had already been hospitalized and undergone exploratory laparoscopy surgery that excluded organic causes. During observation the pain relieved with the injection of saline solution, and the adolescent was discharged from the ED and referred for psychiatric consultation at the outpatient clinic of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department. Regarding the adolescent family history, her parents divorced when she was 11 years old and her father was living in another country for 7 years, maintaining an increasingly scarce contact with the patient. The girl had feelings of abandon regarding her father.

Discussion and Conclusions: There is evidence that, as in this case, the families of children with recurrent abdominal pain are usually matrifocal, and virtual paternal deprivation may play a role in predisposing the onset of somatoform disorders. We also found a disturbed mother-father-child relationship with the establishment of an alliance between the mother and the adolescent, which was one of the interactions identified by Minuchin as being associated with somatization in children or adolescents.