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INTRODUCTION

Endometriosis is a chronic disease affecting up to 10% of women in reproductive age and about 47% of adolescents with pelvic pain. The main symptoms of endometriosis are dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia and chronic pelvic pain (CPP), but young women report several uncomfortable symptoms, not represented in adult patients. In particular, characteristics of CPP and accompanying symptoms, such as headache or nausea, seem to be more frequent in teenagers and, combined with dysmenorrhea, may address a suspect of endometriosis when performing a local examination or a transvaginal ultrasound is not possible.

The aim of this retrospective cohort study was to compare the characteristics of pain in adolescents and adult women with endometriosis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Hundred-nineteen women were enrolled. Forty-six patients were <21 years old (group A) and seventy-three >21 years old (group B). Age of menarche, periods' length, comorbidities, dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia, CPP, analgesics intake, characteristics of pain, accompanying symptoms and size of endometriomas were considered.

RESULTS

Adolescents with endometriosis referred earlier menarche ($p<0.0001$), longer periods ($p<0.0001$) and increased use of analgesics ($p=0.001$), with less improvement of pain than in adults ($p<0.0001$). Dysmenorrhea was more frequent ($p=0.01$) and present for more days ($p<0.0001$), with higher VAS score ($p<0.0001$), in group A. CPP was more represented in young women ($p<0.0001$) and described as “confined” and “oppressive” ($p<0.05$) by adolescents and as “widespread” by adults ($p=0.007$). Teenagers reported frequent premenstrual or chronic headache ($p<0.0001$) and nausea ($p=0.007$).

CONCLUSIONS

Adolescents with endometriosis presented earlier menarche, longer periods, more painful dysmenorrhea and deeper dyspareunia than women diagnosed during adulthood. Moreover, pain was less responsive to NSADs consumption. Premenstrual pelvic pain, intermenstrual headache and nausea were more represented in young patients. CPP was described as “confined” and “oppressive”, with a higher VAS score than in adults and was sometimes accompanied by nausea and headache.