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Interpersonal and Cognitive Factors Associated with Adolescent Depressive Symptomatology

Objectives: The present study examined potential group differences and similarities between adolescents with clinical depression, subclinical depression, and adolescents exhibiting no depressive symptomatology. A variety of familial interpersonal variables, as perceived by the adolescents, (cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and critical maternal communication style) and cognitive variables (adolescent's perceptions of the self, world, and future) were examined. **Design & methods:** The sample consisted of 91 male and female adolescents from three diagnostic groups: clinically depressed (Major Depressive Disorder or Dysthymic Disorder), subclinically depressed, and normal control adolescents, ranging in age from 13 to 17. For the purposes of this study, six measures were selected: K-SADS; the Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning, Child Version; the Family Messages Measure – Mother; the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support; the Cognitive Triad Inventory for Children; and the Children's Depression Inventory. **Results & Conclusions:** In summary, results from the present study indicate that adolescents with clinical and subclinical levels of depression have similarly negative cognitive triads. In terms of the family environment, clinically depressed and subclinically depressed adolescents view their families in a more negative light. Lastly, clinically depressed, subclinically depressed, and non-depressed adolescents do not have different perceptions of the peer support available to them. Most importantly, results of this study suggest that adolescents with clinical and subclinical levels of depression should no longer be portrayed as separate populations. This has extremely important implications for clinic practice, research and public health policy, as well.