HEREDITARY MULTIPLE EXOSTOSIS AND PAIN: TO WHAT EXTENT IS PAIN ASSOCIATED WITH HME?

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Hereditary multiple exostosis (HME) is a skeletal disorder characterized by the presence of numerous bony outgrowths (osteochondromas or exostoses) that develop next to the growth plates of all bones of the body. Much research has been undertaken to delineate the natural history of this condition and characterize the problems associated with it, however, past studies have not look at pain in individuals with the condition. Recently, it has been noted that members of the national HME support group, the MHE Coalition, have reported pain that is debilitating. However, clinical investigators have not appreciated pain to be a significant problem in the clinic population of HME patients. The present study was undertaken in order to characterize pain in individuals with HME. A total of 293 individuals with HME took part in this study. Eighty-four percent of individuals reported having pain, with 45.3% having pain daily. Of those who reported having pain, 55.1% have generalized pain. Two factors were found to have a significant influence on pain, (1) having complications secondary to HME, such as compression of tendons, nerves, and blood vessels, and (2) having surgery. Individuals who have complications due to having HME are 5 times more likely to report having pain, while individuals who have had surgery are 3.8 times more likely to report having pain. A significant age difference was also found between those who report having pain and those who do not, with significantly fewer individuals under the age of 11 reporting pain. No significant differences were found between males and females with respect to pain,
surgery, or having complications secondary to having exostoses. This indicates that males are not more likely to have a more severe form of HME than females, as was previously reported. Additionally, it was found that significantly more individuals who are members of the HME support group report having pain. The results of this study indicate that the number of individuals with HME who have pain has been underestimated. Pain is an important aspect of HME which must be addressed when caring for individuals with this condition.