Participant 10

Duration: 28.47

Mother of Dysmenorrheic girl (16 years old)

Interviewer: OK (name), if you could start off by tell me a bit about yourself please?

Participant: Erm I’m (name), I am 46 years of age, I’m a primary school teacher in (location) and I have 3 children.

Interviewer: OK, could you tell me about your living situation so…

Participant: Yeah, I’m married, I live with my husband (name), I also live with my children (name) who’s 16, (name) who’s 14, and (name) who's 9, and the dog.

Interviewer: And the dog-can’t forget the dog. Err what type of things do you like to do in your spare time?

Participant: Err I like swimming, cooking, um going to gigs, music, going to the pub, that’s it really.

Interviewer: That’s good- erm so if it’s OK can we now talk about (daughter)’s period pain?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Er so can you start off by telling me when her periods started?

Participant: Err just after her 12th birthday

Interviewer: OK and when were you first aware of them.. did she tell you straight away?

Participant: Yeah she did, yeah.

Interviewer: How did she tell you?

Participant: She just came down and said mum I think I’ve started my period and I’d already talked to her about it before and I checked everything was ready and so yeah that was it.

Interviewer: OK and did she start err experiencing pain straight away?

Participant: Erm, err in my memory, I seem to remember the first time she was a little, a little bit achy erm but nothing major erm and, and that seems to have been the case sort of since then. She’ll have a bit of discomfort each time but it isn’t massively sort of challenging or it doesn’t seem to be for her so she just takes a tablet and she’s alright really.

Interviewer: OK, and how about any other symptoms…

Participant: Erm she does get a little bit moody in the run up to her period and she can get quite fatigued during the time that she’s having one so I tend to notice it, if she is going to fall asleep maybe after school- it’ll be, it’ll be around that time err and certainly if she’s gonna be temperamental then it would be in the kind of 4 or 5 days beforehand.

Interviewer: OK, is the fatigue, is that just related to general periods or is that also because she might be in discomfort?

Participant: I think yeah possibly she doesn’t sleep quite as well, I tend to hear her getting up in the night at the time so I think then it’s also yeah because she, shes just more weary during that time and she would never normally come home and fall asleep on the settee but if she did, it tends to be around that time.

Interviewer: OK and have you noticed if there’s any times when like the discomfort is worse or better?

Participant: Erm I think she’s quite similar to me in that it would tend to be at the start of her period when she gets the most pain and the first couple of days um and then tails off and it’s not, it’s not as bad later on and then but other than that no, it’s probably the only patter I would say I’ve noticed.

Interviewer: OK. And erm how about the regularity of it…

Participant: Yeah it’s pretty good, she’s pretty much on the dot I think. I don’t really keep track of that but she does and it seems to be about what you would expect so…

Interviewer: OK and has it changed at all since she first started getting the period pains?

Participant: Erm I think the periods were further apart when she first started and I would say probably not as painful at the beginning. Now, from what I can see, I mean she always takes paracetamol with her to school, so she’s always got some in her handbag, I would say pretty much each period she would take some at that beginning part. She’d say, she usually says to me “oh I’ve got cramp” and then it’ll happen, you know she’ll start kind of during that time erm but I don’t think, I don’t think it’s kind of gone, it kept increasing, once she was in that kind of established pattern, that’s kind of what the pattern is, she tends to take a tablet around the first couple of days when she needs to and then sometimes she’ll ask for a hot… she’ll make herself a hot water bottle in that time but not every month. Erm yeah.

Interviewer: OK, and can I just ask general how is her health.

Participant: Good. Yeah.

Interviewer: Good, OK. So can you tell me about any erm treatments she’s had for her period pain, if she has had any?

Participant: She hasn’t had anything more than just over the counter pain killers erm, paracetamol, ibuprofen, that’s really the only things that she would take and as I say she might put heat, heat as well if she needs to but other than that she hasn’t had anything no.

Interviewer: OK, did they seem to be quite effective?

Participant: Yeah, she, once she’s had that kind of thing she she doesn’t tend to complain so much then or if it’s, if it’s, if it’s particularly bad, which isn’t very often, she might take it at kind of intervals during the day but it tends to be, she has a dose and that gets her over the crappy couple of hours and then she’s alright, it might take them another, the next day or, but she doesn’t take anything kind of throughout the whole time erm yeah.

Interviewer: OK and does the, the heat you said, does that….

Participant: Yeah she will sometimes lie down and have it, have a hot water bottle in bed or whatever and she doesn’t seem to think that that’s particularly effective. You know I always suggest that she does it but I don’t know if she thinks it works particularly well for her so, she’ll still do it now and again but she, she just doesn’t think it’s a good thing to do particularly.

Interviewer: OK so painkillers are the main thing?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: OK, erm is there any reason that she hasn’t been to the doctors or anything about it, has she ever thought to go?

Participant: I’ve never thought to take her because it doesn’t seem to be so acute that she would need anything more than that, she doesn’t complain persistently, it doesn’t last you know days and days and days it doesn’t massively impact on what she wants to do erm we went to the GP about her skin and they didn’t suggest that she had any… you know that she went on the pill or anything like that for that so it’s not something we really thought about and they’ve given her a topical thing for that so that seems to keep her skin in check reasonably well so it’s not really, she has never said you know, I want something more than normal pain killers so at the moment it seems to be alright.

Interviewer: Yeah, so we just talked about her skin, does that seem to get worse at that…

Participant: Yes definitely, yeah.

Interviewer: Erm is there any other like, any other symptoms that err would be unrelated to pain that she might get during her periods?

Participant: I think like I mean her diet changes a little bit around that time as well so she tends to eat more in the run up to it and she might eat more kind of carby type things like what she wants to eat changes a little bit erm and I think she’s probably less likely to want to do much then as well, she kind of gets a bit more, a little bit more mopey, like I say, not massively but enough to make her a bit like “I can’t be bothered”, erm so and I think it would, if, if there were things like sleep overs or staying at another person’s house around that time she might be a bit less inclined to want to do it but it doesn’t seem to stand in her way, you know she doesn’t think oh I cant go just in case but if she was in the first couple of days it would make her a little bit less likely to want to do something like that.

Interviewer: OK and has that impacted on her friendships or anything like that?

Participant: I don’t think so no, erm she’s quite resilient really, she doesn’t let things get her down so even if she wasn’t really feeling brilliant- she might, I suppose things like you know they’re all going out to town or something and she was having a lot of pain she might say oh you know I won’t go or I’ll join you later but it’s not intense enough for it to be, or frequent enough to stop her from seeing people or anything like that.

Interviewer: Does she talk to her friends about it?

Participant: I think some do and some don’t, she says you know, some of her friends, she’s not sure about what they do or anything else and I don’t think it’s something that they sit and chat about, I’m like I know when I was her age we did, it’s just her group of friends don’t particularly talk about it that much.

Interviewer: OK, and how about you, does she talk to you?

Participant: She does if she’s got pain and things like that and she will, she’ll always ask if she wants anything buying or anything like that and she’ll ask her dad as well, she’s not really bothered you know, unlike my other daughter who I think will be very private about that sort of thing, (name)’s quite relaxed about that sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK, err and can I ask does it, does it affect what she does around the house like, you said she can get a bit mopey…

Participant: Yeah she’ll probably be more likely to be late out of bed, earlier to bed and just a bit more lying about as opposed to, she quite likes doing stuff, she’s reasonably wants to go out you know and, and do things but I think that, during that time of the month she will be a bit more, I just wanna lie here and watch the telly and, and not be bothered about going out particularly you know she’s quite, yes, yeah I think so definitely. Makes her a bit lazier yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah and do you think that that, that’s all because of the pain or do you think…

Participant: I think it’s that general feeling around the time, I think she’s a bit more achy and a bit, just it does seem to ti, tire her more than anything else and I don’t know as I say if that’s about unsettled sleep pattern around the time or just the physical feeling, you know that kind of feeling of being a bit achy and under the weather makes her feel a bit more like that and it doesn’t, as I say it doesn't, it wouldn’t stop her doing things so if there was something we were gonna go and do, a planned event, she would still do it but given the choice at that time, I think she would be more likely to read a book or watch a bit of telly and chill out yeah.

Interviewer: OK, and erm, have you noticed does it, does it affect the way that she feels about herself do you think?

Participant: (pause) her skin would yeah, yeah she does, she’ll kind of be a bit more self-critical, erm but, I think she just accepts it that it’s just a part of life and she’s just got to get on with it really erm, I, I don’t know, I, she, she might change what she would wear, you know she might not feel so confident possibly but she’s never said that to me but that’s just me perceiving what she kind of tends to wear around that time. She never wears jogging bottoms or things like that but she might do then because, I think for the comfort and nothing too tight around her belly and things err and she doesn’t, she never wears trousers which is hard because I suppose you might feel more self conscious and then she’d be wearing shorts with tights rather than skirts and dresses which is what she lives in really so I think it does change, she has to think about what she’s wearing, and that maybe changes the way she’s dressed but that’s just my take on it really you know she’s never said that to me.

Interviewer: You mentioned that she, she’s quite sort of resilient, and erm can you tell me a bit more about that so why you think… is it to do with the way she copes with it?

Participant: Yeah, she’s not particularly moany so even if, if she’s got a headache she’ll go and say “I’m taking a tablet” and you know that, that’s, she just gets on with it, she doesn’t sit and mope and wine and things so it’s quite difficult to judge how much pain she’s in because she’s quite you know, she just gets, gets on with stuff generally, you know when she’s not well and she’s got a cold and things she’ll still go to school- she won’t ask to be off or anything like that so I think erm, some people might give up a little bit more with the amount of pain that she’s in- you know we’re all a bit like that and you know, sometimes I’ll feel absolutely crappy but you know you just kind of get on and that’s what she’s like so, yeah she’s not, she’s never asked for a note for PE or begged to not be able to do something when she’s been in pain, she just takes the tablets and just takes it on the chin.

Interviewer: Has she asked for any time off school or anything like that?

Participant: I think very early on, there was an occasional day where that’s probably the main reason why she was off but not particularly now, I think as she’s got older she, I suppose there’s other things, the curriculum changes and she’s not doing regular PE lessons any more, she doesn’t have to go swimming at school and things like that so it means she can deal with it a bit more easily now whereas when she was younger there would be things happening that might have been harder, especially early on and she, she hasn’t got on particularly well with tampons, she’s tried them lots of times, it doesn’t suit her so she’s still kind of and that, that, that’s more of a, you know, a discomfort and feeling self-conscious about it I think that’s harder isn’t it so, so I think it might have been more about that, things like getting changed for PE and stuff then and panicking a bit you know but she hasn’t even then, she didn’t really, she wouldn’t come to me every month and go “I don’t wanna do it”, she still got on and did it but I do think there were a couple of times where she’d had a really bad night or she’s had a lot of pain during the night and you could just see she was very pale, very tired and I just kept her off because I thought she’s not going to get through the school day particularly well but it’s definitely not a regular occurrence, definitely not.

Interviewer: When she does go to school erm, do you find that, do you think it affects how her day has been at school, whether she’s got on and concentrated…

Participant: Erm, it’s hard to say- she’s only really ever had the very occasional, you know where she’s come home and she’s had a really bad day and I dunno whether I’d be able to say whether it’s always been when she’s had her period, I know sometimes it definitely has been erm, I’m not sure. She does get headaches a little bit as well, a kind of, it’s not like a period migraine but she will, and I’m the same, we quite often get a head, a persistent headache around that time and I think that sometimes affects her because she does a lot of close studying, a lot of reading err but yeah again nothing huge.

Interviewer: Mhmm, OK, do you ever, do you ever err worry that, that erm if she does go to school that it would affect her school performance or anything like that when she’s there?

Participant: I think the way that they handle the school they run, that getting to the toilet can be an issue and I would imagine that the, that thought and the anxiety around that may have an effect on how shes concentrating on a lesson because there’s not enough toilets and their not particularly and they’re probably not as private as you’d want them to be and you know the window between lessons is tiny and they’re very, very strict you know you’re off down the corridor blah blah blah and there’s no excuses- I think that perhaps would have a little bit of an effect on- she’ll be thinking “oh I’ve got to get to the toilet between here and here because I’m not going to be able to go to the toilet again in this amount of time today” erm so yeah, possibly that side of it and if she’s tired yes, you know I, I think cause as I say I don’t keep her off, she’s just goes in if at all possible and some mornings I’m looking at her and I’m just thinking I can tell you haven’t slept particularly well and you’re a bit low this morning but she hasn’t come home and told me that she’s had rubbish days regularly or anything so…. And it, and it, her result suggest that she’s doing alright so it’s a bit hard to judge I suppose. I think she’ll have off days definitely.

Interviewer: But it’s not affecting her per…

Participant: No, no, no.

Interviewer: That’s good, good,

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so how about her sibling relationships- would it ever impact cause you said….

Participant: Well she shares a bedroom and I think that’s probably been quite challenging, she’s going to move down into that room down stairs and I think that’ll be good for both of them, I think they both need privacy and space erm. They will bicker more when she is in that sort of time slot, in the run up, I can kind of, and that’s quite often my indicator, I think oh god she’s gonna come on in the next couple of days because she’s quite short tempered and she’ll get ratty and her sister is in that puberty, I mean her’s are gonna start at any point I would imagine, she’s been very late erm and she’s narky quite a lot of the time so that’s not ideal. But they do quite well actually, remarkably well considering, you know they’re not *fighting* fighting but there’s a tension at times yeah.

Interviewer: And how about with her brother?

Participant: I don’t think it, maybe she’s a little bit more impatient and he is oblivious at the moment, completely to girls and girl things so it’s not something she’d be able to say “leave me alone I feel like this and this is why”, I think it would just go over the top of his head erm for now, yeah they get on pretty well with him, both of them so it doesn’t seem to have any sort of impact on him I don’t think.

Interviewer: OK and how about, so how does that impact on you and your stress levels, so if there is tension between (daughter) and her sister, and hormones or she’s fed up because she’s in pain, how would that impact on your day or your….

Participant: Yeah, yeah, if it’s in the morning it probably is more of an issue because in this house that’s a very stressful time of the day anyway because we have a very short period of time to be out and done. Since she’s been in sixth form it’s not been so much of a problem because her day is different to ours so the demands on things like the bathroom you know if she wants to go in there and have privacy erm she can do that a little bit after we’re gone now but I think that probably was a bit of a bug bear before she went into sixth form because she didn't want (her sister) in there and she just wants to get on and do her own thing and quite often she wants to be just, if she’s in pain she just wants to lie in the bath in hot water for a long period of time and one of them will be hammering on the door you know wanting to be, even though we’ve got another bathroom in our room it’s still you know, there’s 5 of us erm I don’t like it. We’re not an argumentative family at all we’re all quite passive and not, not, not, you know we don’t really have that about us, we talk a lot but we don’t fight very much at all so when it does happen it’s quite distressing, I don’t want them, I don’t want them doing it at all and I think if they do, they hide it from me a little bit but I can sometimes hear up there and I’m like what’s happening, what’s happening, but they don’t come down here and scream at each other or anything like that- I think they probably hide. I know it’s happening and also because my friends daughters who spend a lot of time with them will say of (two daughters) argue just as much as we do and I’m thinking oh I’ve hear you two but they tend to do it out, out of me, away from me because I get quite upset about it so…

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: Yeah so if they are like that, I don’t like it and they know I don’t like it so I think they probably just keep it away as much as possible.

Interviewer: Yeah, and how about, so if you can tell that (daughter) is, she’s got a tummy ache, not feeling very well, how does that impact on you and your stress levels?

Participant: I, it’s one of the reasons why I want her to have another room because I think she needs that space for herself, she goes and locks herself away up there quite often and that means (younger daughter) can’t be in there because you know I want her to have peace and quiet but you know it won’t be very long until they’re both gonna need that sort of space and that, that worries me a bit. I think if I’m sending her off to school and I know she’s not 100%, I absolutely hate that but I don’t wanna keep her off either because you know I went to school with girls who would have and she does, one of her closest friends has time off pretty much every month and I just didn’t ever want to get into that pattern for her because it’s with her now for the next 40 year or whatever and she’s gonna have to deal with it on a monthly basis and you know I want her to be quite resilient like that so I don't want to have to do it but I have to be ‘bad mum’ sometimes and make her go in even though I can tell she’s not 100%. But I suppose just talking about it makes me think well I’ve never actually thought about doing anything extra so it’s not enough, it’s not often enough, I don’t feel like that often enough for me to think “do I need to do more about this”, I don’t think I do because most of the time it’s absolutely fine um, but you know I don’t like going to work feeling like I’ve had to be unpleasant in the morning or they’ve had a bad start because that then will affect my day because I’ll be thinking about if they’re alright or whatever and just thank god I’ve got a mobile phone so I can just send her a text saying “you OK, you alright” or whatever so…

Interviewer: Do you find you do that?

Participant: I do sometimes if she’s gone out looking not, not great, or I’ll make sure (husband) can pick her up so she doesn’t have to walk home you know they’re a long way from here they walk and it, it’s a good walk in the morning and night so if she’s not good in the morning I’ll get him to go and pick her up from school if I can.

Interviewer: OK, and how about erm, so does that, does that impact on (husband)’s work? Is that difficult for him to…

Participant: Yeah he wouldn’t be able to get away easily but because it’s not very often, and if I rang him and said look will you pick her up, he would just do it- he’s on flexi time so he just makes the time up at another point and he, they’re alright, they’re quite open with him as well so he knows if she’s not feeling great you know, she doesn't hide it from him, she’s quite happy for him to know about that so no it’s alright he can usually sort something out and there have been times where, they have to work quite hard my kinds, they’re coming home- she’s got a little job after school two nights a week, one of them comes home and walks the dog you know, they always have things that they need to do so if she rings and she says oh I’m really tired, I’ll say don’t walk him, one of us will do it when we get in and sort him out- just go home and have a lie down or whatever. I don’t think she’s ever left school having gone in… for that… ever I don’t think. She’s had a couple of times where she’s felt a bit wobbly but err she’s never been sent home or anything like that.

Interviewer: OK, and erm, so how do you, when you are feeling a bit… if you’re feeling upset because maybe the girls have had a bit of a bad start or (daughter)’s not feeling well, how do you cope with that- how do you make yourself feel better?

Participant: Well I think I’ve got the sort of job where, once you’re through the door, you can’t think about anything else so even when there’s been something like family bereavement or, like my dad’s got cancer and having to deal with that, it’s kind of, once you’re in you can’t really think about it at all because the children are so demanding of your time and your thoughts that you have to just shove it out your head but then at lunchtime I’ll probably text or when I come home they’ll say “are you alright” or “sorry” if it has been a bad start to the day. Like I say it’s so rare that it’s not really something that’s, would impact on my work life much anyway because this doesn’t happen frequently enough for it to be an issue.

Interviewer: That’s good. OK and how about, relationships between family members, when things are a bit tense, do things get a bit tense in the house?

Participant: Sometimes, sometimes, we get on alright though, we kind of muck along OK. I think it’s probably, you know we try not to be like that with the kids but we might be more like that to each other, we get in the car and we just go to work in silence (laughs), say nothing, say nothing, because if it’s been a bit of a fraught morning you know, but not, nothing, nothing major no, unless I’m hormonal then I’m stroppy as well then so you know you’ve got that into the mix to poor (husband)! He doesn’t have a clue after having to deal with one of us after the other…. (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs) Oh bless him. Erm OK, um, how about things like say (daughter) isn’t feeling well and you say she can just lie down on the sofa and not do a whole lot…

Participant: Mhmm

Interviewer: So does that impact on say she might not be able to do family chores or something like that, how would that…

Participant: Possibly I will probably be more likely to be nagging at her to do it and I’m probably not that sympathetic to be honest (laughs). If, if I knew she was in pain I would leave her alone but the rest of the time I’ll probably just try to make her and say “come on try to do this, takes your clothes upstairs, put these things away” or whatever, I’m not very good at being nurse- I’m not very sympathetic I don’t think. You might be, like I say, just leave her alone I’ll take the dog for a walk or whatever but again it’s not often enough for me to feel resentful and think “oh she’s not pulling her weight” or anything like that, she’s usually really, really good and would do it anyway even if she wasn’t feeling great erm, they, they, they sometimes bicker if one of them feels the other one hasn't tidied the room or leaving stuff but they’re as bad as each other to be honest so they just bicker generally about that sort of thing erm so no nothing huge, it doesn’t make a big, big difference.

Interviewer: OK, is there anything that we haven’t covered that you would like to talk about?

Participant: No, no, no I don’t think so, I think yeah she’s generally OK, I think life would be a lot easier for her if she, and I assume she will as she gets older, but if she’d use tampons more, I know that seems to me that kind of revolutionised my life as a teenager, once I kind of got over the hump of that and did it then that, you never go back then that’s it- it just makes life so much straight forward but I keep encouraging her to try so hopefully and that will, the school side of things and the day-to-day practicality of it- it’s just less to carry and it’s less obtrusive and all of that would be easier. I’m gonna try and get (younger daughter) in from day one (laughs). Just not give her the option of anything else and then she won’t be in the same position. Alright?

Interviewer: Yes thank you very much, I’ll just stop the recording.