Participant 19

Duration: 20: 43

Mother of two dysmenorrheic daughters (12 years and 16 years)

Interviewer: So if it’s OK could you just start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: Right erm I’m 45, married with 2 daughters, work as a GP in a [location) um, that’s about it really (laughs)

Interviewer: OK how old are your daughters?

Participant: (eldest daughter) is 16 and (youngest daughter) is 12

Interviewer: OK and who, what’s your family situation, so who’s at home?

Participant: I live with my husband and, and the girls.

Interviewer: OK and what do you do in your spare time?

Participant: Um usually ferry the girls around in the car and go to the pub, we do pub quizzes sometimes um, we go to the cinema, eat out, have friends round, go to friends houses and I do quite a lot of gym stuff, I run and do spinning and pilates and not always all of those things but I try and fit in as much as I can really.

Interviewer: OK and do both of your girls experience period related pain?

Participant: Um they do to a certain extent. I think it’s difficult for me because I don’t think that they do really because I only see people who have quite severe pain at work but they do a bit yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: OK so would you be able to just start off by starting from the beginning so when they started their periods…

Participant: Well (eldest) started hers, I think she was quite old, I think she was 13 when she started hers, I’d told her all about what was going to happen, much to her disgust when she was about 10 or 11 um and she just sort of started and was just fine with it, I think cause we’ve always been quite open so you know within the first couple of periods, I gave her some of those little purple tampons to use and she just got on with it and she just she’s quite private and she’s just kept it to herself since then, she lets me know if she needs, what she needs then I’ll go and get em and sometimes she has a bit of pain and takes whatever I give her.

Interviewer: And how about your youngest daughter?

Participant: (youngest) is 12, she started just last year, I think she was just 12 at the time um and she was the same she just said mum I think this has started, she didn’t want to use tampons at all but then she had a swimming party one day and I gave her one and she was quite, she’d rather, she didn’t want to miss the party so it was a big, and she did it and she knows she can if she needs to and she’s been alright with it to really. I can always tell when it’s gonna happen though erm, thye just have, they get moody and yeah.

Interviewer: OK so you mentioned moodiness, um do they experience any other symptoms?

Participant: Um (youngest daughter) gets a bit of pelvic pain, she gets back pain as well and sometimes she says she feels a bit lightheaded, just generally kind of off a little bit um but I think the moodiness, especially with 2 girls, the moodiness, they just massively clash and it doesn’t help that I get that same symptom so yeah just on that one day yeah. Erm, I don’t think she really gets much else, a bit tired…

Interviewer: How do they, how do they let you know that they’re in a bit of discomfort or pain?

Participant: They would just come and tell me. Usually come and ask for pain…they know that if they take some ibuprofen it’ll make it better so they’d come and say and they’d never take medication without asking so it’s more that ‘can I have some medication’

Interviewer: OK so then you’re aware they have it?

Participant: Yeah and give them it yeah.

Interviewer: OK is that something that you discussed with them before that they should let you know when they’re taking…

Participant: Well they just wouldn't take anything without but I think our house is quite strict, they wouldn’t take a chocolate biscuit without asking or… the only thing in our house that’s a free for all is a fruit bowel so they would always just ask. You know in case they’re on other medication or you know yeah

Interviewer: OK so can you talk to me a little bit about if you know the time-frame of their pain so, do they tend to get it for like a few days or is it just a day in the month?

Participant: I think it’s probably, they probably have it bad enough to have pain killers probably one day a month. I probably give them maybe 2 doses and then after that they’re fine.

Interviewer: OK and do they tend to take pain killers every month or every few…

Participant: No it’s not every month, it’s sometimes they don’t need any.

Interviewer: OK and are their periods regular?

Participant: Well (eldest) is taking the pill at the minute for her skin

Interviewer: OK yeah

Participant: Erm and she doesn’t, she sort of tricycles it so she doesn’t, well she takes it continuously until she has a breakthrough bleed and then stops and then starts again so hers are, that’s how hers are and (youngest), she seems to be dead on regular, she keeps note, she’s got an app on her phone so she takes, she knows when it’s happening then.

Interviewer: Does that work? Is it effective?

Participant: Yeah it does yeah, well she gets an idea when she’s going to come on.

Interviewer: That’s good, my mum used to make me do it on a calender.

Participant: But you forget don’t you, she’s really good at remembering things like that. If she has a task she does it, she’s quite strict about things like that so.

Interviewer: Erm so can you talk to me about any times when you’ve noticed that their pain is worse or better, if you have noticed so..

Participant: Erm, I think if they’re kind of low anyway about something, they’ve got homework to do or, you know if it happens when they’re on holiday and they’re all active and everybody’s having fun, they don’t seem to be troubled so much by it you know if they’re distracted but if they’re sort of, if they’ve got stuff to do… I’m not saying they use it as an excuse, they don’t- you’re just more aware of pain if you’re, you’re, things aren't as good so I think then they would notice it more but that’s the only thing I think.

Interviewer: OK has either of their… has it changed at all over time since they started their periods? Has it got worse or better over time?

Participant: Well when (eldest) bleeds now I know it’s a lot heavier now than it usually is, I think because she’s on the pill, which should really make them lighter so I don’t know what’s gone on there but no I don’t think so.

Interviewer: OK, OK so generally, is both of their health OK otherwise?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, they’ve not got anything.

Interviewer: OK and have either of them been to the doctors about anything sort of period related things?

Participant: No, they have been lucky I think yeah, yeah, I think (eldest) vomited once at school um but she’s been, she was having her period at the time but I don’t know, I think it was just the pain and she wasn’t feeling well and yeah… vomited on some year 7’s (laughs).

Interviewer: What happened after that, did she go home or….

Participant: Yeah she went home from school, she was on her way to the nurse and the nurse sent her home, my husband went and got her and she came home.

Interviewer: Was it easy for your husband to get out of work?

Participant: I can’t remember but we’re really lucky, my mum and dad live nearby as well so they can, just around there, there’s always someone around.

Interviewer: OK so it’s not inconvenient…

Participant: Um no. Not really.

Interviewer: OK, OK, erm and what happened like did the pain and the sickness kind of disappear across the evening or continue?

Participant: Oh I can’t remember… I think it was pretty much gone that night.

Interviewer: OK so..

Participant: It was short lived yeah definitely, yeah.

Interviewer: OK so what types of things do either of them do to relieve their pain so not just like ibuprofen but do they use heat or distraction techniques or…

Participant: I suppose they naturally do distraction, they wouldn’t call it a distraction technique but I suppose that’s what I was talking about before, they kind of yeah, they’re quite stoical girls, they’re quite robust, so I think yeah they take a couple of paracetamol and because we’re doctors we always, we’ll just medicate everything you know when people say ‘I don’t like to take pain killers’ I think well why not? If you’ve got pain you might as well take a pain killer and they have that same attitude, they have pain, take an ibuprofen and it gets better so, we’ve talked about hot water bottles and stuff, (eldest) will tend to take herself off to bed and take a nap, which she would never normally do but if she’s got her period she does get tired and do that.

Interviewer: Do you think that’s to do with the pain related to periods or is that just because she’s on her…

Participant: No I think the pain makes her feel grotty so she just wants to go and lie down so she’ll just go and lie down until it gets better.

Interviewer: Does (youngest) do anything like that at all? Does she have any other ways of dealing with it?

Participant: No, I don't think so

Interviewer: OK, OK are there any differences in the way they cope with it within themselves?

Participant: Um, they’re both very different children um (eldest) would be more likely to come and, she would come and have a cuddle you know and she’d come and get on you and but as (youngest) would kind of take herself off and um, yeah. They’re not really, when she feels, I think she’s just more likely to get on with it than… so (eldest) would take herself off to bed and (youngest) would take a pill and a pogo stick or whatever and I’ve told them that exercise helps and (youngest) tries that too cause it definitely does.

Interviewer: Do they find that that’s effective if they do do exercise?

Participant: I don’t know if (youngest) would know that but yeah it does cause she’s really, really active and I think that helps.

Interviewer: OK so she’s doing that anyway…

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Interviewer: OK, so what are your, what are your, do you know why they cope with pain differently? Like different personalities or…..

Participant: I think they just came out different, they’re just different children

Interviewer: OK so it’s not an age thing or…

Participant: No, sorry (laughs)

Interviewer: No, no, no, yeah

Participant: I think they’re just different personalities, they deal with everything differently.

Interviewer: OK, OK, can I ask about how, how it’s impacted on their activities of daily living, so if they’re feeling a bit grotty and they’ve got pain and they’re feeling tired, if it impacts on what they would do around the house and just things they would do day to day?

Participant: Erm, do you mean like helping in the house?

Interviewer: Yeah that could be one…

Participant: Neither of them help around the house at all so that would make no difference (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs) OK

Participant: Um, they’re probably a bit more grumpy when I ask them to do anything like if I say it’s ‘oh no it’s always me, it’s never her’ you know they get really grumpy about that um I suppose (eldest) would get less active when she was on her period, she’d be less likely to do stuff and she sort of doesn’t want to eat what I’ve made for tea you know she wouldn’t really want that, she’d want something different erm you know cause they have what they want to eat at that time don’t they, they want that sort of comfort food and but erm it doesn’t really make much difference to them, not really, they just get on with it.

Interviewer: They just get on with it…

Participant: Yeah pretty much

Interviewer: OK and who do they talk to about it, about periods and things like that?

Participant: Me, yeah I think me and probably their friends as well, they’re much more open with their friends about periods than I was at that age you know and I don’t know if people are just more open these days but we’re very open with them so I think but yeah she knows when her friends period is and you know they sometimes give each other things like tampons or whatever so yeah they talk to me, if they had a problem with it they’d talk, I’d like to think they’d come to me.

Interviewer: And what about their dad?

Participant: Not so much, no, no they don’t go to him I don’t think.

Interviewer: And why do you think that is?

Participant: Um, just cause I’ve sort of always dealt with that kind of thing with them, like if I was stuck and they needed something they’d tell him like he’s approachable in that way, they wouldn't have to like go into their piggy bank and go to the shop on their own and stuff, he’d help them with it but it would always be me just because they know that I do it and I always have talked to them about it so…

Interviewer: OK, so can I ask does it impact on like their social lives in terms of like sleepovers and things like that or… anything?

Participant: No

Interviewer: No, so they would still…

Participant: They would still go

Interviewer: OK erm and does it impact at all on the way that they feel about themselves, their self-esteem?

Participant: No, they get a bit spotty before which they don’t like but apart from that no

Interviewer: OK, and you said (eldest) is less active, like less exercise, is that involving like sports and things?

Participant: Yeah she plays hocky, she goes to hockey every week and if she’s feeling like that she just doesn't want to do it. I say if you go it’ll make you feel better, just gotta make her go to be honest cause it will make her feel better so quite often she comes back red faced and she’s better so….

Interviewer: OK so it’s a good thing…

Participant: Yeah, she’ll probably not tell you that but I think it is

Interviewer: Is um, what reaction do you get when you say ‘go you’ll feel better’?

Participant: Well she’s not very happy but in my eyes it’s something that’s got to happen, you’ve got to just get on with it you know and maybe I’m a bit mean but she does and she goes and sometimes I go ‘you feel better don’t you’ and she says ‘yeah’ grudgingly

Interviewer: OK so can I ask about family holidays, is there ever an issue around planning around, you’ve got 2 teenage girls…

Participant: No we just go

Interviewer: OK so if either of them are on their period during the holiday does it impact on what you do or whether it’s enjoyable or anything like that?

Participant: No it wouldn’t, not really no. Well if one of them was feeling unwell, we would come home but quite often they’re distracted and they’re on holiday and they’re active and yeah they’re quite happy using tampons like I said before both of them so they would go swimming and um…

Interviewer: OK so can I ask about how it impacts on your life, if at all so your stress levels and stuff like that? So you mentioned when the 3 of you women in the house are on your periods, sometimes it can get a bit tense- can you tell me a bit more about that and how it impacts on your stress levels?

Participant: I mean they don't come at the same time their periods, I always know when (youngest) is coming, particularly (youngest) because she’s quite moody anyway but a couple of days, the day before it comes she’s foul, I can’t say anything to her she’s snappy, she’s particularly horrible to her sister and just weepy so that is quite stressful and trying to, you see them coming along, I pick them up from school every day and you see them coming along and you see the face and you think oh here we go, she’s full of doom and gloom and so yeah but just mood wise really and you have to tread on egg shells around her a little but, but (eldest) not so much. I think it’s cause she’s on the pill it’s different really but yeah.

Interviewer: And does that impact on your husband as well?

Participant: If they’re snappy he just doesn’t get it , he just thinks they’re being naughty so yeah, it is, he’s not as good (laughs)

Interviewer: Does he find that stressful?

Participant: Yeah he does, he finds the two of them fighting and that whole increased tension, he finds it really stressful.

Interviewer: And does that impact on your relationship together?

Participant: I mean sometimes it feels like I’ve got a teenager, he’s a teenager as well because he’ll fight with them you know rather than just saying look that’s enough stop it, ‘what’s gone on here, what’s happened?’ so yeah it does cause I get cross with him them and say just leave them alone so yeah a little bit.

Interviewer: And is there, the moods, is that hormones or pain as well?

Participant: I think usually it’s not related to the pain. It would be the lead up rather than, they’d have the pain, it’s the day before usually or a couple of days before that they’re moody and the pain comes when they start.

Interviewer: Erm, can I ask what you do when you’re feeling a bit stressed out with it all? What do you do to calm yourself down or make yourself feel better?

Participant: Either go to the gym or have a drink (laughs)

Interviewer: Do you find that helps both of those?

Participant: Oh yeah both of those help really well yeah, just get out the house but it doesn’t get that bad, it’s really not that bad- I’m painting a picture of it’s horrendous and it’s really not but yeah just, it doesn’t both me that much a bit of eye rolling, I don’t get too stressed about it really.

Interviewer: OK so does it ever impact on, so you said that it doesn’t impact on your occupation or anything like that and you don’t have to pick them up from school and they don’t miss time off school for period pain?

Participant: No

Interviewer: Do they try? Do they ask at times?

Participant: Actually no they don’t, no, no. I think (eldest) maybe asked once but gave her medication and sent her in.

Interviewer: And what about when you have like birthdays, Christmas, like visiting other family members or friends, does it ever impact on like whether you would go as a family, or whether the girls would want to go if they’re groggy and in pain, if you have something planned would it impact on that?

Participant: No it wouldn’t, they’d go anyway yeah.

Interviewer: Erm so is there anything we haven’t covered that you’d like to talk about?

Participant: No, I don’t think so….

Interviewer: You can always let me know if you think of anything else…

Participant: Me and (eldest) were talking on the way over about boys attitudes to it and when boys in their class even hear them talking about periods they’re like (makes noises), but apart from that not really no. I think that’s it.

Interviewer: OK thank you very much

Participant: That’s alright, you’re very welcome.