Participant 7

Duration: 32.56

Dysmenorrheic girl (16 years old)

Interviewer: So (name), if it’s OK can you start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: Erm, so I’m 16…

Interviewer: Mhmm

Participant: And I go to school and erm I do some sports outside of school, I do rowing, and that takes up quite a lot of time of my life…

Interviewer: OK

Participant: And yeah I’m busy with school with my GCSE’s and stuff…

Interviewer: What GCSE’s are you taking?

Participant: Erm Spanish, History, Drama, and PE. And then you know, the normal ones like English, maths, yeah..

Interviewer: The core…

Participant: OK, and so with your rowing do you enter competitions and stuff l, like regionally so… north and stuff…

Interviewer: Right, erm, how about like your family living arrangements so who lives here?

Participant: Erm just my mum and my dad.

Interviewer: OK, brilliant so, you’re in year 11, just starting your GCSE’s, when are you taking them?

Participant: Erm, May I think it is.

Interviewer: How’re you feeling about it?

Participant: Erm, it’s alright, we’ve just had our mock results back and it’s all looking OK.

Interviewer: Oh that’s good.

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Erm so would it be OK to talk about the period pain that you experience?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so could you just start off by telling me a bit about it like, when your periods started and things like that…

Participant: Um, I started my period in year 6 so I was 11. And… erm, I always had painful ones since I was, when it first started and erm there used to be, I’ve always had regular periods, they’ve never been irregular, they’ve always been in a, a month but then, as I got older they got erm more frequent so I can have 2 a month but they’re never late, they’re just always early and the pain’s got worse as I’ve got older.

Interviewer: OK, so, erm, how would you describe the intensity of the pain like when it first started?

Participant: I remember a few times, I can’t remember that well, but I remember in year 6 I would have to go to the medical room because I was the only one in my year who’d started it because of my pain and I guess they didn’t really know because they weren't use to have many year six’s having period pain and then throughout my school, I’ve had loads of days off school because I then had to go to the doctors and try taking different medicines and that….

Interviewers: OK erm, could you just erm describe it for me as in like how, how it feels and the location of the pain?

Participant: Um, so you know like, where it normally is (points to lower abdomen) in your womb I’ve got it but then I also get it on the right side of my stomach, and this must be like a month ago now, I had PE and I collapsed because of the pain on my right side and um, I get leg pain, like my legs go numb and I get lower back pain.

Interviewer: OK, are they all like a similar, it’s in quite a lot of different locations so do they all feel like a similar pain? Do you know what I mean? Is the type of pain the same?

Participant: Like as eachother?

Interviewer: Yeah so, the pain in your tummy, does it feel the same as the pain in your leg and back?

Participant: The pain in my stomach is like, a kind of, tight like something’s wrapping round it and then, my legs it’s more, it’s really hard to explain, it’s kind of like they’ve gone cold and it’s, you know when you’ve got muscle cramp and you just want to stretch out, it’s like that but it only happens on my period, that’s uncomfortable.

Interviewer: OK, can you talk to me about the sort of time-frame so erm, how many days throughout your period will the pain last?

Participant: Every day.

Interviewer: Everyday, so from start to finish?

Participant: And especially worst the day before and on the day but it’ll hurt throughout.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it starts the day before then?

Participant: Yeah, so I know like when I’m gonna start cause I get the pain.

Interviewer: OK and do you get any other type of symptoms?

Participant: Erm, I get stress a lot and I get moody so I kind of know that I’m going to start but yeah that’s it really.

Interviewer: Erm do you have any other un-related medical conditions or anything like that?

Participant: No

Interviewer: And erm, so you said that the pain has got, has got worse since you’ve got older, can you tell me a bit more about that so how, how has it changed, has it changed like location wise, has it, you know…

Participant: Um, I think err, how long the pains lasted, like when I was younger I’d probably only have it like you know, the first day, but now I get it every single day and I think it’s just more intense the pain like it’s not, when I was younger, it would be standard like take a few paracetamol and a hot water bottle and it’d be fine but now I could do that and it would still be there.

Interviewer: OK,and do you know any times when it’s kind of worse or better, does it um, is it the same intensity every month…

Participant: Err, is it err, sometimes I’ve been given loads of medicine so that can help it but say I didn’t take anything then no it would be the same.

Interviewer: OK, so you have talked about things like taking lots of medicines and stuff, can you tell me about the treatment that you’ve had from the beginning if you know what I mean? So take me through…

Participant: OK yeah, so I started off on feminax when I was younger and then just like ibuprofen and nurefen and I had um, I think I started off on nurofen, cause I was only 11 I started off on sachets, cause I couldn’t swallow, and then I had feminax tablets, and then I think I was in year 8 or 9- I was still young but I went on the pill because, to regulate it, cause I was getting it really early and they said you know that would help the pain but because I was young I didn’t like the thought of being on the pill because you know everyone says about the side effects and I didn’t like it so I wouldn’t take it, especially though if you miss one you know you can start bleeding so I didn’t take that, then I got put on um, I think tranexamic acid, and metamorphic… I can’t remember what it’s called.. and then I was put on another pill and I take naproxen and tranexamic acid.

Interviewer: OK so when was the first time you went to the doctors about the pain?

Participant: Year 6…

Interviewer: Year 6, so you went straight away?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK and what was your sort of experience of going to the doctors?

Participant: Um, at first they were like oh no it’s normal, but then my mum, I think she had quite bad ones when she was younger so they said try out on like the basic pills and see if that helps, but it didn’t so, every time I’ve gone back they’ve given me the higher pain killer…

Interviewer: So um, what have you found err the most effective, cause you’ve taken quite a lot of different things so are there any that seem to work?

Participant: Probably the one I’m on now, the naproxen is quite good.

Interviewer: OK, and how does that, does that take away the pain completely or….

Participant: Um, it doesn’t get rid of the pain but it kind of makes you feel like it’s not there so it’s only when you start thinking about it so I guess like all psychological but you start to you know, remember that it’s there again.

Interviewer: So it reduces it enough…

Participant: So that I can go to school, there are still a few days where I can’t go to school…

Interviewer: OK so can you tell me have you had any examinations or investigations or anything like that?

Participant: Um, my mum said, I’ve had like, just like touch, like prodding me to see if they can feel anything. I don’t think they felt anything and that’s why they put me on the pill and then they said well because I’m 16 I might have to go for a, I forget what it’s called… where they look inside…Yeah, that, but I haven’t had that no.

Interviewer: OK so you haven’t had an internal investigation or anything like that?

Participant: No

Interviewer: How do you feel about, you said you’ve had some discussions about maybe having that- how do you feel about that?

Participant: Not really comfortable.

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: But I guess if that’s gonna solve it, then I might have to…

Interview: Yeah. OK, can you tell me about your experiences with like doctors and things like that and how, how you felt about doing that?

Participant: Um, I had this, I’ve only had like 2 doctors so it’s always been like the same woman but um, I’m not, I don’t like taking medicine, I don’t like taking things that aren’t natural for the body and I guess that is my problem- I could probably sort myself out more but I just don’t you know, having to wake up- oh I’ve gotta take 3 pills now and then 2 later- I just don’t like it.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK, have you spoken to your doctor about how you feel about taking medicines and that?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: How did they… did they suggest any other way…

Participant: They just said that’s all we can offer you, painkillers so…

Interviewer: OK, and have you looked into any other ways that…

Participant: Um, we’ve looked into, it helps me if I have a hot bath but that’ll only reduce it for like an hour or so, I have a hot water bottle during the night…

Interviewer: Does that help?

Participant: Um, it can keep me asleep, to get an OK sleep.

Interviewer: OK and anything else, any like herbal stuff or…

Participant: No, I haven’t tried that.

Interviewer: OK so if you’re at home and you’ve got the pain, a bath and hot water bottle would be the things…

Participant: Yeah and just yeah relax.

Interviewer: OK, how do you feel about the future with your pain? Do you expect that it…

Participant: I don’t think it’ll get better I don’t think because it’s been so long but erm I think it does need to get sorted because I can’t have days off work in the future that I’ve had off school cause my attendance has suffered quite a lot from it.

Interviewer: OK, so what are your sort of plans, what do you hope to, you mentioned that you were thinking of you know, maybe going to have an internal examination to see if there was anything, erm can you tel me a bit more about what you plan to do?

Participant: Um, I’ll probably, cause I’ve only just been put on a new medicine, just the start of this, start of the school year so I’ll probably try that a bit more. I’ve stopped taking the pill because I don’t like it so I, my mum said to do a 3 month trial on that and then I’ll see what it’s like in about 6 months or something and if not I’ll have to go back to the doctors.

Interviewer: What erm, what don’t you like about the pill?

Participant: I just don’t like having something that isn’t natural controlling when you have your period, especially when I’m only just turned 16 and you know, none of my friends are on the pill for period reasons.

Interviewer: OK so your not sure because…

Participant: Cause you don’t know what it’s doing…

Interviewer: Yeah, OK and erm so, can you tell me- has anyone explained, have the doctors explained to you what the cause of your period pain is?

Participant: I can’t remember the word, there is a word for it but I can’t remember what it is, erm I know what the period pain is like your muscles or something but erm they haven’t said why mine’s so bad and they haven’t explained why I don’t just get it like everyone else gets it.

Interviewer: Have you asked them?

Participant: Um, probably have but I can’t remember what their response is…

Interviewer: OK, and how do you feel about that…. Would you like to have more of an explanation or…

Participant: I’d like to have, probably an explanation of like how, why you get it and like if it is serious like you’re, why are you getting it rather than everyone else- they just get normal period pains for like one day so why are we getting them e very single day and so painful that you just can’t do anything but sit down with a hot water bottle.

Interviewer: OK, and how about the school…

Participant: Um, well school’s been quite helpful erm when like I’ve had period pains before they used to let me come into the medical room or they would send me home, which they’ve done quite a few times um, but then a lot don’t understand, they say oh you’re off because you’ve got period pain, we all have them… but they don’t understand how it’s so painful, I, I couldn’t go in.

Interviewer: Yeah, um you mentioned about um you collapsed recently?

Participant: Err yeah most probably about November…

Interviewer: OK, could you tell me what happened?

Participant: OK so we were doing the bleep test at school cause I do GCSE PE and I’m erm, my friend and I got quite far up through the levels and then after we stopped we went outside to the water fountain to get a drink and I was standing there and I just felt this sharp like pain like rip through my side and then I went into the green area and just collapsed onto the group and I was like (name) can you get miss, so erm they came and I can’t remember but apparently I was just holding my stomach and I fell asleep for like 2 hours holding my stomach. They called my mum because they thought it might be appendicitis cause it was on my right side of my stomach but erm when I got home I realised I was on my period so….

Interviewer: OK, so did you go to the doctors or anything?

Participant: My mum was trying to make me go to the walk-in centre but I refused.I wanted to go home, I didn’t want to sit in the doctors waiting…

Interviewer: OK, did you go after at all?

Participant: no

Interviewer: Erm so can you tell me, so it sounds like the school, they took that quite seriously and got your mum to come and get you erm if any other time you ahd to take time off school and stuff like that erm how, how are the school about that with your attendance?

Participant: Um well my attendance is, OK at the moment but it has been below 80% you know like the guidelines are 90% or something so I did get letters home but we have explained to them, I have got doctors reasons why you know so yeah….

Interviewers: OK and has that changed since, you said it started in year 6…

Participant: Erm in year 6 I couldn’t have days off cause my mum and dad wouldn’t be there to look after me , but now I’m older so I can look after myself at home. Yeah so it’s probably been more recent that I’ve started to have more days off school cause of my period.

Interviewer: OK so if you do go to school, what, what would happen, would it disrupt the day or.. how would it be?

Participant: I’d probably start crying, I wouldn’t be able to move and I would, if I went in I would just refuse, I would ask to go home because it would be so painful I can’t concentrate on anything, it’s so distracting, cause I get really heavy periods as well and I would be like constantly bleeding and it’s not nice…

Interviewer: OK and if you did have time off, how much time would you have- like a day or two….

Participant: No longer than 2 days case after, it’s actually usually the first two days when it’s started cause after that you know I can cope with it.

Interviewer: OK, and is that, do you think that you take time off with every period….

Participant: Um, I think it depends you know, sometimes it can be more painful but there’s other times when the first few days, it will be bad but I can cope with it so…. It’s not every period…

Interviewer: OK can I ask has it affected your concentration at school at all or your performance- actually being able to do tasks….

Participant: It probably has moreso with how it’s affected my attendance, I’ve probably fallen behind in a few subjects because of what I’ve missed out on and if I’m on my period at school with the pain, I’m not concentrating so probably not doing as well as I could.

Interviewer: OK so how do you feel about that?

Participant: It’s quite annoying and also we have, in PE we do swimming and because, we did it every two weeks and because mine were so frequent, I missed lots of things I couldn't do as part of my GCSE.

Interviewer: OK, is that the time when you were sometimes coming on twice?

Participant: Yeah, I do, it’s quite common that I’m on twice.

Interviewer: Will it always be as painful, even if it is twice a month?

Participant: Erm no, it’s usually, say it was regular, the ones that would just com in between aren’t that painful.

Interviewer: OK, so you still get some pain but it’s not as much.

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, so can you tell me about, you mentioned about school- can you tell me about daily, other daily activities that you would do? So like things around the house or anything like that…. So if you’ve got a part-time job, or chores…

Participant: Erm, if like I was on at home, I it’s like the same, I can’t concentrate on things, I’ll just sit down all day, it’ll stop me going out with my friends a lot.

Interviewer: How are your friends about that?

Participant: Hmmm yeah, cause they don’t have the most perfect periods either so we’re all the same.

Interviewer: OK yeah, erm so they understand cause…

Participant: Yeah they do

Interviewer: OK erm how about, so you might not be able to go out with your friends, how about things like erm hobbies, you mentioned rowing…

Participant: Yeah I won’t go rowing if it’s too heavy and too painful.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Participant: Err probably bad because my coach would, gets a bit annoyed, I haven’t been in quite a while due to just being tired err they do make me tired a lot so I think I’m getting blood tests for anaemia.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK, is that, so that’s from being at the doctors, so did you mention that to them?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, so erm when’s that by the way?

Participant: Erm I was meant to have to quite a while ago, we just haven’t been organised

Interviewer: OK, so does your coach understand?

Participant: They don’t know, I just say I’m not feeling well.

Interviewer: OK, why don’t you tell them…

Participant: Because it’s a man, he probably won’t understand.

Interviewer: OK, so is it different if you would talk to men or women about it then?

Participant: Yeah, I don’t think men would understand to be honest.

Interviewer: OK, so erm at school have you- do you talk to teachers about it?

Participant: Only the medical lady.

Interviewer: OK, so there’s no one there like tutors or anyone….

Participant: No, my tutor’s a man so… no

Interviewer: Do you think it would be different if it was a woman

Participant: Erm maybe well I’ve said like the other day in biology, my teacher was like what’s wrong and I was like I’ve got period pain and he was like errr so…. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK so are there any other like hobbies or things like that…

Participant: No not really…

Interviewer: OK so how about erm support, do you talk to your family?

Participant: Yeah I talk to my mum about it, and my dad.

Interviewer: Are they quite understanding about it?

Participant: Yeah, they’re just like you can’t have days off school, get used to it because you can’t have days off work but honestly I wouldn’t go off school just because it’s hurting but I just can’t go in.

Interviewer: OK so if you do have to have a day off school erm what, what, what do you do, how does that affect you? Is it difficult to catch up or…

Participant: No it’s not too bad because it’s only like one day, one or two days at a time and it’s quite easy to catch up but it’s probably just frustrating that cause it’s not like you’re ill….

Interviewer: OK, can you tell me about family life and things like that? Does it impact on anything you guys do together?

Participant: Erm, the pain makes me unwilling to interact so if I’ve got a really bad painful period, I’ll go upstairs a lot, spend a lot of time by myself and also it probably affects my mum in the fact that I wake her up in the night because it’s so painful, I need her to get me stuff.

Interviewer: OK and do you, do you miss out on sleep?

Participant: Yeah I lose a lot of sleep.

Interviewer: How does that affect you?

Participant: It makes me tired, probably a bit ratty.

Interviewer: OK, and how’s your mum when you wake her up in the night?

Participant: She’s good yeah, she’ll get up and do whatever’s needed.

Interviewer: What would she do?

Participant: Um, get me a hot water bottle, I’ve many times gone and had a shower or a bath at like 3am in the morning cause it’s hurting. And erm you know I get those leg muscle pains, I woke up at my friends, I was staying over and it was like 3 o’clock in the morning, I had to wake her up doing like leg stretches cause I was getting some weird leg pain.

Interviewer: How was your friend about that?

Participant: She just laughed

Interviewer: And how about erm, family events like Christmas or family holidays…

Participant: Erm, luckily I’m not on, I think, for every holiday we’ve been on so that’s good.

Interviewer: Yeah that’s good, is it something that you would think about before?

Participant: Erm yeah because if it was painful, I wouldn’t enjoy the holiday, I wouldn’t be able to go out and do things so I was quite lucky that I can use the pill and do that.

Interviewer: OK, so you mentioned that you went on a sleepover, and you got your leg cramps- would it erm, would it ever stop you going to friends houses and sleeping over and things like that?

Participant: Yeah it would if I was on the first day of my period, it does make me unwilling to go round friends, if I wake up in the night I’d be scared and especially leaking and, you know getting the pain- a lot of my close friends, they’d just get me a hot water bottle.

Interviewer: Erm so can you tell me, does it impact on your family relationships so you say you talk to your mum and dad about it but does it impact on your relationship with them in any way?

Participant: Err I don’t think so just probably, it’s probably improved in the fact that I can tell them more stuff about it but then it’s probably not made it, you know, if I’m keeping her up at night, that makes her stressed.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s understandable.

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Erm OK so how do you feel when you have to wake your mum up or…

Participant: I’m not really bothered about it cause it hurts so I wanna go to her (laughs)

Interviewer: And how about, how does it affect on how you feel about yourself?

Participant: Errr, probably just annoying like why do I get this pain and none of my friends get this.

Interviewer: Have you got any friends who…

Participant: They don’t get the pain no, like weird timings and stuff so I guess they can relate in the fact that it’s not normal but they don’t get… apart from (name), my friend does have, used to have the pain but I don’t think it was as bad but she got put on, go back a stage, she got put on one of the earlier pills I had… the metamorphic acid thing

Interviewer: OK and has that worked for her?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so yeah does it impact on your confidence?

Participant: Um, I’m not sure if my period pain is to do with that but I have had like self-esteem issues but not now, that was like 2 years ago…

Interviewer: OK so we talked about family relationships, we talked about friendships, how about things like boyfriends or anything like that, has it impacted on that side of things?

Participant: No, not really, my long-term boyfriend was really understanding….

Interviewer: OK, so how about future plans so does it impact on how you plan events or…

Participant: Yeah if I had an event coming up I’d do my best to not make my period come so I don’t have the pain.

Interviewer: How would you do that?

Participant: Use the pill, which you’re not meant to do.

Interviewer: OK so you’ve mentioned that about using the pill to try and make sure that you don’t have it, but are there any other ways that you use to cope with the pain so…

Participant: Other than hot water bottles and baths… no I think that’s really what I use like the medicine and stuff like that…

Interviewer: Do you think that, cause obviously you started your periods quite young, do you think that, as you’ve got older, the way that you cope is different?

Participant: Erm, I think when I was younger I didn’t really know as much about it, I guess I probably coped better with the pain you know, I just kind of accepted, oh I’ll put up with it cause I’ve got no other options but I guess now I’ve got more medicine and I kind of probably use that to rely on more rather than say well I’ve got to put up with it, I’d rather go with that.

Interviewer: OK so how does the pain impact on you, your stress levels…

Participant: Yeah I get stress a lot, very stress, very quick to say things that I regret a lot cause you know if you’re in pain you just get angry a lot and you know you just want it to go so you just take out the anger you have with the pain on other people.

Interviewer: OK and erm, just one last thing, is there anything within yourself that you use, like distracting yourself or something like that, is there anything that you do to help you cope?

Participant: Just, focus not on it so if I do have pain I’ll focus on it not being there and sometimes that does actually work, psychological stuff, you’re not thinking of it so you won’t have it but that rarely works.

Interviewer: OK and how about to reduce those stress levels?

Participant: Sleep, I sleep a lot.

Interviewer: Do you find that actually helps?

Participant: Yeah, cause you’re not feeling it when you’re asleep.

Interviewer: OK and very, very lastly, is there anything we haven’t covered today that you’d like to talk about?

Participant: No, I don’t think so

Interviewer: OK are you OK for me to stop the recording?

Participant: Yeah.