Participant 4

Duration: 30.03

Dysmenorrheic girl (13 years old)

Interviewer: So (name), could you start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: Well, erm, um, um, quite um, personally I think I’m quite good at school erm, and everything’s good at school, haven’t got any problems um yeah….

Interviewer: That’s good, um, what school year are you in?

Participant: Erm, I’m in year 9.

Interviewer: OK, how’re you finding it at the moment?

Participant: It’s OK (laughs)

Interviewer: What’s your favourite lesson?

Participant: Errrm, probably English or Art.

Interviewer: OK, I used to like those…

Participant: Laughs

Interviewer: And how about any hobbies?

Participant: Erm, probably drawing, reading, and writing.

Interviewer: Uhuh. Who’s at home? (pause) Who do you live with at home?

Participant: Um, my dad, my mum and my sister.

Interviewer: How old’s your sister?

Participant: 17

Interviewer: OK. So, if it’s alright now, I’d like to ask you a bit about the period pain that you experience?

Participant: Um, Yeah. I started when I was… I’ve only been on it for two years, I started when I was 11 and when I first started coming on it I got really ill an it was over Christmas ummm, I got really bad stomache aches and I felt like I was ognna throw up and Christmas dinner is surpose to be like amazing and eat it all of it but I hardly ate any of it so that was quite sad (laughs) but yeah… and then um, I’m very very heavy and like Im heavy and like when I, when I do get the pain sometimes I get a month where I’m heavy but no pain, but then I’ll get, like last month, I’ll get really really bad pains and I was off school for about umm a day and a half or something like that and yeah it’s not good (laughs).

Interviewer: When your periods started, because you said that when you first started you got sick…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Did the pain start straight away as well?

Participant: Erm no, probably, for the first couple of months, six months, something like that I was completely, didn’t have any pain and I thought oh this is gonna be easy erm but it got um, I got the pain erm probably the first year of my periods and then it was really bad and it really did hurt.

Interviewer: So, has the pain changed at all since you started experiencing it?

Participant: Err well it start, it, it was quite a mild, but it still hurt cause obviously the first time I was getting it and I was like oh this is really bad and then I’ve learnt to deal with it but then it just gets worse and times like, I’ll have times when it’s a lot worse and times when it’s not so…

Interviewer: Yeah. OK do you know, have you noticed in the times when it’s better or worse, is there a pattern with it?

Participant: It normally goes from, I’d say, two months good, then two months really bad pain so… (pause)

Interviewer: OK. Can you describe the pain to me?

Participant: Errr it’s hard to move when you’ve got, it’s quite uncomfortable cause you’re trying to find a good position to be in and, you never really can so you end up trying to kind of pull your legs up to you trying…. I dunno like… why I do that…. To try and secure it I guess erm…. But it’s, it’s… feels like…. Um…. Errrmm….It’s very, it’s very uncomfortable and if I take tablets it doesn’t really go away, it’s always there I guess it’s, more than hurting it’s annoying cause I can’t concentrate on other things cause constantly there. So (laughs) yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK so um (clears throat), how long does the pain last for during your periods? (pause) When does it start and when does it finish?

Participant: Errrm, normally as soon as I come on. Literally as soon as I get the showing of blood then I get the pain straight away like as soon as I start erm and then probably go for about 3 days and really bad pain and then it will start to slow down and then it will, start, start to stop so… yeah.

Interviewer: OK. And um, where abouts on the body is the pain?

Participant: Um, just above like the groin area like….. (points)

Interviewer: So at the bottom of your tummy?

Participant: Uhuh

Interviewer: Does it go anywhere else?

Participant: No, it’s always there.

Interviewer: OK, erm. Do you have any other symptoms, you mentioned before about feeling sick…. Is there anything else?

Participant: Ermm, If I really do get a really bad like pain I will have, get not so much of an appetite and that can last for about a week after the period but it kinda depends on how bad the pain and the period have been.

Interviewer: OK. And can I just ask about your general health- do you have any other medical conditions?

Participant: No (laughs)

Interviewer: So can I now ask about any treatment you’ve had? (pause) or anything you do to made it feel better?

Participant: Errr we’ve discovered like we’ve figured out there’s a certain tablet that is the best like, we’ve, we normally go for feminax or erm just like period pain relief. They’re, they’re, they’re not… they don't take it completely away but it helps but then we also use like, you know the things you put in the microwave and heat up, we use them to try and like take away some of the pain but err we’ve spoken to the doctor about it and because I’ve obviously only been on for 2 years they say that there’s nothing that, like I can’t go on the pill or anything because that’s what happened to (sister), she had to be put on the pill erm after 3 or 4 years of like similar periods to me so….

Interviewer: So when it gets to that time do you think…..

Participant: I hope, I hope I get put on the pill because it’ll make my life a lot easier (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah. So when did you first go to the doctors about it?

Participant: Errrr well, when I first started, when I got really ill, I did go to the doctors erm but that day when I was actually going to the doctors I came on and my but was prob… said that yeah that’s probably what all the illness was and I think I was put on antibiotics for the illness like just then and then when the bad pain started about six months later I think I did complain a bit to mum and said that a bad… and… because… since the beginning of this year erm and maybe halfway through last year I got my periods twice a month so we had to go to the doctors about that because I think it was about six or seven months I had it twice a month.

Interviewer: Did you get pain for every…

Participant: Yeah. Uhuh.

Interviewer: And, (clears throat) what was it like going to the doctors? What happened?

Participant: Well we spoke about how heavy it was and umm like the pain what it felt like and how often cause I normally had two weeks gap in between each period um and I had to show them a diary of when I had my periods, when I started and when I finished it for each month and everything like that….

Interviewer: Uhuh and how, how, how was that? Did you find that keeping a diary helped?

Participant: mmm well the kind of, well, I don’t wanna like sound….. but they kind of palmed us off with… she’s just started it, it’ll straighten itself out… it took a long while to do something but it did eventually. I’ve only just started going back to one month. But…. Nothing really came about going to the doctors. They just said oh… it’ll sort itself out.

Interviewer: Yeah. And erm, how did that make you feel?

Participant: It didn’t make me feel better about getting it twice a month and thinking oh it’s this, cause I thought it was a bit strange. And I guess it did worry be a bit because none of my friends and like my sister and my mum hadn’t had it twice a month like ever since they've started so it did worry me a little bit but going to the doctors didn’t really… put my mind to rest like…. Until it stopped,…… started to go back to the regular time of once a month. That… once that started…. That helped but erm up until then it didn’t.

Interviewer: How about keeping the diary, did that make any difference?

Participant: It helped in going back to the doctors. I could look back and…. It has shown to sort itself out and erm cause I write down when I get the really bad pain if erm, It’s really heavy or…. A bit… like sorting it out like that. It did help showing to the doctors. Well I guess it helped me keep organised (laughs).

Interviewer: Erm, OK. How about anything else that you do, you mentioned about the pads you put in the microwave…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: … and the tablets that you use, is there anything else that helps ease the pain?

Participant: Welll umm, when I first started getting the pain, mum told me to try and breathe through the pain so if it started to just just breathe, breathe really deeply and that did help but it obviously didn’t take the pain away, but it kind of relaxes me, and tries, and helps me concentrate on like what I’m trying to do cause, especially in school, cause you can’t take tablets in school when they, you have to do it sneakily cause obviously you’re not allowed to unless you go to the office so I try and like figure out how like, calm myself down when I get it.

Interviewer: How do you feel you cope with the pain when you’re calming yourself down?

Participant: I think I cope quite well but erm, there’s sometimes when I get, not panicky, but I get fed up when I’m trying to, I just kinda wanna, just sleep and like… make it go away. Like, sometimes nothing works and it frustrates me so I just wanna give up with trying.

Interviewer: Yeah, and what do you do then when you feel like that?

Participant: Erm, well, if I’m at school I’ll ring or text mum and tell her because we’ve had problems with my school about sending me home because they say oh every girl gets it um so you need to deal with it erm, we, cause we’ve had problems about it before and mum just ended up coming to pick me up and sign me out and I text her now if I’m at school and if I’m at home I’ll just go to sleep, go into my room or sleep on the sofa.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK, erm, can I ask you a bit about how, what you expect in the future with your period pain?

Participant: Well I hope, I hope, when I’m old enough, I’m hopefully gonna ask if I can go on the pill cause I, I know it helped (sister) and mum with their erm but I doubt it will change in the near future, maybe later on, but not, not in the next couple of years, I think it’ll stay the same. But, cause I’ve got my GCSEs coming up, starting this year and I’m starting the main subjects and this year I’m starting to think, cause I have quite a lot of time off school for my periods and, I’ll be missing out on a lot of lessons and work and things so yeah (pause)

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Participant: Well everyone like, if you say like I had to have a day off school, normally people are like oh yeah let’s have a day off school but I guess it just gets kind of bores me cause like, I enjoy school and I don’t wanna, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with it (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: But, em, if I do have my periods and if I am quite ill, I’ll just stay on the sofa and I probably won’t eat and I’ll just watch television but then if I have two days like that, it’ll start to bore me and I’ll want to go back to school but I can’t.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you’d rather be there…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Um, so how, if you would, if you would, you mentioned before that you had a day and a half off recently

Participant: mhmmm

Interviewer: how often do you think you take time off for period pain?

Participant: Ermm, not so much often this school year but last year I know that I did have every 2 of 3 periods I’d have at least 2 days off or something like that and yeah, probably a bit more when I had it twice, I had a bit more time off school then.

Interviewer: Yeah, how were the school about that?

Participant: Well they, as I said they, we do have problems with the school, they don’t, if I’m ill I’ll just tell mum and she’ll pick me up and say I have a dental appointment or something like that because we do have problems with them. A lot of teachers like, if I say I don’t wanna do PE for instance, they’ll say oh well every girl gets it and em say that I’ll get a detention if I use that as an excuse next time and they wont… they had em… a problem where we, I went to the office saying I had stomach pains and they were like oh we can’t really send you home for that but they rung mum and mum told them to say she would be picking me up and they didn’t tell me that and they let me go off back to lesson. And then I told mum, and I text mum and said can I please come home and she was like I told them I’m coming to get you so we, the schools not very happy about it.

Interviewer: That must be quite difficult sometimes for you

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Erm how about, when you, when you are at school and you’ve got period pain, does it affect your day? How does your day go?

Participant: If I have the bad pains, I can’t concentrate on the work or anything so I’ll end up just kind of sitting in the lesson not learning anything, nothing going in just focussed on the pain and trying to figure out how I can make it better till I could get home and like relax but it is hard because, I kind of have a short temper with people and I’m just like don’t touch me, go away, and don’t talk to me so yeah…

Interviewer: Yeah, does that affect friendships or anything like that?

Participant: Errrr well, my other friend gets similar periods to me so she understands erm and two of my other friends haven’t started so I guess, they don’t understand as much as my two friends that have but they do know that I get bad and they do understand if I’m a bit cranky and it’s because of my period and they just like brush it off and they won’t think anything of it so…

Interviewer: That’s good

Participant: Yeah (laughs)

Interviewer: And, and how about things like daily activities, erm things that you would normally do in the day, does it affect anything like that?

Participant: Well if I have got period pains I, normally I walk to school, every day my friend, me and my friend walk to school together…

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: and if I have got period pains, I’ll probably ask mum to take me to school so I won’t do that and, if it’s just that on the weekend or I’m off, I won’t do anything really, I’ll just stay on the sofa or in my room on my bed or something like that I wouldn’t move really.

Interviewer: And does that impact on erm like your social life and going out and things like that?

Participant: Yeah cause ermm, when I’m off like the next day my friends will be like oh this happened yesterday and telling me all about this stuff and how they had fun and it’s sort of like oh but I wasn’t there and it’s quite annoying because you miss out on a lot and it’s not just learning missing out it’s also stuff that your friends are doing and it sucks really (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah. And how about hobbies, you talked about sports or PE and you feel like sometimes you can’t do that at school but anything outside of school, anything extracurricular?

Participant: Erm I don’t actually do any extracurricular stuff (laughs), I’m not a very sporty type (laughs)

Interviewer: Me neither (laughs). Um, what about, OK so you said things that you enjoy things like reading, does it affect those types of things that you do?

Participant: Well if I’m in a lesson and like normally in form we’ll have a day when we read for the whole of form or the beginning of every English lesson, read for 10 minutes and if I have got a period and I’m trying to read a book, I’ll read it and I’ll look back at the page, I’ll look on the page but none of it got in, I just read the words but none of it makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you’re trying to read but because of the…..

Participant: Yeah, nothing’s going in and it’s hard to concentrate.

Interviewer: Yeah. And how about things like family life?

Participant: Well, me and mum are normally on at the same time and sometimes (sister) is on at the same time so we’re all just kind of snappy at each other and just kind of little things annoy each other and also dad, I mean he probably gets a bit wound up with it as well especially with stuff like disposing of like sanitary towels. It’s hard, I never, we used to err, me and (sister) shared a room, erm I felt uncomfortable putting sanitary towels and bags in the bin cause she, she didn’t like putting mine in, in the main bin cause if mum said can you empty the bin she’ll feel uncomfortable with doing it so I didn’t really know where to put it some of the time if my bin’s not in my room I don’t really know where to put it so

Interviewer: So what do you do?

Participant: Um, I normally, cause I’ve got my own bin now I put all my rubbish in a bag and if I’ve got a couple from to, the day that I’ve been on I’ll take it down and put it in the outside bins.

Interviewer: So you’ll just do it yourself?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, and how about erm, erm when you said, you get snappy at each other, um does that, does anything, does that cause any difficulty?

Participant: Erm, well normally there’s little things with like mum and (sister), they’ll have an argument about something that doesn’t need to be an argument about but there is and then mum will be in a bad mood and so will (sister) and then everyone will be in a bad mood, just the whole house is in a bad mood (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah, it’s difficult (laughs). How about your dad, you mentioned that he, obviously might end up getting involved…

Participant: Yeah, he normally, he doesn’t, I don’t think he completely understands like he says oh cause he’s got 3 sisters well I grew up with 3 women, I know what periods are all about and everything but erm, he doesn’t really understand that when you’re on you don’t want anyone to annoy you and to talk to you really, you want to be left alone but he doesn’t really understand that so he just annoys us most of the time (laughs).

Interviewer: So, the way that you feel and the difficulty there, is that because of the pain or about the pain and the other bits about being on or…

Participant: Probably like erm cause it puts you in a bad mood and you’re a bit hormonal and everything cause and I dunno you’re just, it’s the pain as well because, especially if you’ve got really bad pain, you don’t, you’re focussing on the pain and then someone’s talking to you about something and it’s not going in and then they try and say oh was you listening and it just does wind you up (laughs).

Interviewer: Laughs. OK, how um, does it affect how you feel about yourself?

Participant: Errrm well it does, it sort of, when I have got it, it just winds me up sometimes, like I’ve got to deal with all of this and like especially if I’m going in the shower or anything I’ve always gotta have a bit of tissue like for when I get out for the towel to make sure I don’t get it on the towel and then I get in the shower and I realise I haven’t got any and it’s just a pain really (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah, so how about, how, how does the pain, does the pain affect how you feel about yourself?

Participant: It does really I guess cause I often think oh why’d I have to go through all this and it’s like what have I done, why have I gotta do this (laughs) so it’s a bit annoying (laughs).

Interviewer: (laughs) Yeah, OK. Umm, do you talk to anyone about it?

Participant: Um, well my friend, as I said has got similar to me, I mean we often, if we’re both on, I dunno why, but because we're both hug each other and talk about, and have emotional conversations and talk about how annoying it is and all the things about being on your period and then, so and then, I talk to her a lot about it and then, I don’t really talk to mum and (sister) about it. I’m not sure why I just think, I don’t want to talk to them about it because I don't like people seeing me when I’m vulnerable and or upset like if I wanna cry, I’ll go off and cry on my own I don’t want people to see me erm so I don’t like people to see me when I’m like vulnerable so, so I’ll, I probably wouldn’t talk to mum or (sister) about it because I wouldn’t feel…. Not that I wouldn’t feel comfortable but, it’s just that I kind of, kind of find it hard to talk about like myself and my feelings and stuff like that. I dunno why (laughs)

Interviewer: No, it’s OK. Erm, what, how about anyone else like people like school or….

Participant: The school don’t make it very encouraging to talk about that because… there’s a specific teacher, my PE teacher doesn’t like me because I’m not the sportiest girl because I sometimes take… say I don’t wanna do something because of my period she, she kind of makes you feel bad, she makes you feel guilty for having a period like she’ll start having a go at you and threaten to give you a detention and there, there’s not really anyone at the school you can talk to who’s in that department and there’s no, none of the teachers, obviously they’ve all been through it but, they don’t ever say to you if you want to someone then you can like, not really.

Interviewer: How about the school nurse or anything like that?

Participant: We don’t, we don’t really have a school nurse, we just kind of have women who work in office and then if someone’s ill like they sort with them as well like they’ve got, they can look after the ill children as well and they, I don’t really like any of them because they didn’t handle, before when I had my period very well and they were, in my opinion, quite rude to me about it. So, I don't feel like I can talk to them either.

Interviewer: How were they rude to you? What did they say?

Participant: Well, because obviously every woman gets a period they've, they've obviously had an easy time with periods and they, they don’t know how I get and if you say I don’t feel very well they say oh every woman gets it and they kind of take you back to class and say you’ll be alright and everything erm, and they don’t really make you feel comfortable and erm like that you can take a break and so…

Interviewer: Yeah, how do you feel if you get taken back to class? (pause) Do you just stay there for the rest of the day then?

Participant: Erm well I wait for a break or lunch and I’ll text mum because I, I’ve given up with the school really I, they don’t, I guess they don’t really listen erm about how you actually are they just want to get their point across so we’ve given up with telling them if I’m ill, I’ll just tell mum and mum will say I’ll pick you up at this time. That’s easier.

Interviewer: Yeah. Erm (clears throat), can I ask, going back to the doctors and things like that..

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Erm have you had any like examinations or investigations or anything into the cause of your period pain?

Participant: Ermmm (pause)… n… I don’t think so no.

Interviewer: No, OK erm, and do you know what the cause is, is there anything you think is the cause of your period pain or has anyone explained that to you?

Participant: No directly about mine but I know like about menstrual cycle and all about that. I know what it all is about but I don’t really understand how one person get it more like erm heavier and more painful than someone who gets it like really light and like easy. Yeah…

Interviewer: Yeah, have you ever asked your doctors about it?

Participant: Well when we first, when I was getting it two times a month, I guess, we kind of did ask him like why is it happening, why is it two times a month, you know why is it so heavy and they don’t really give you an answer, they’re like oh you’re just starting so it’ll straighten its… they don’t really give you a direct answer it’s just, they brush it off I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK. So I just wanted to ask you about future plans- if it affected your plans to do anything in the future or anything like that?

Participant: Ummm well there’s I guess, well there’s some things I don’t think I’ll be able to, not deal with but, if I have it, I know that I have a short temper when I’m on it and I know that I can be quite snappy with people so it, it does make me think about whether I can, well I think, I think I will prob, not be rude but be a bit snappy to people yeah and I won’t care who it is but if they’re annoying I’ll tell them. I dunno, that’s just what happens when I’m on, I don’t care who it is, if they annoy me I’ll tell them (laughs).

Interviewer: So um, how about things like family holidays or erm, family activities I mean you mentioned about Christmas, not wanting, feeling sick and not wanting to eat your dinner and does it affect any other family stuff?

Participant: Err well it can um we’ve been out before and I’ve been on and I’ve had to, it’s hard to discretely you know if we go out, I’ll put my err sanitary towels or whatever I’m taking in mums bag and I’ll kind of wait, I’ll be like mum can I have your bag, I have to do it discretely and just kind of take it out erm and it does, it does affect it because I am so heavy I’m constantly worrying about it like have I come through, especially if I’m not on when I’m supposed to be on Im thinking oh have I come on now and I have to go check to make sure and it happens a lot at school as well the, oh I’ll say oh can I go to the toilet I’m, I I’m worrying about it a lot of the time If I’m, if I’m gonna come through onto my clothes and (laughs).

Interviewer: I know (laughs). OK. I think we’ve covered most things but is there anything we haven’t talked about that you would like to talk about today?

Participant: Erm no

Interviewer: Is there any other way that the period pain impacts on your life or…

Participant: I guess, most of all it’s just worrying about it because I have to, it’s always on my mind whether Im on it or not, if I’m on it, whether I’m going to come through, and if I’m not on it, when am I gonna come on it because I’m so… when I was on twice a month it felt weird when I wasn’t on it (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: Yeah I was a bit like well what’s happening now then and it’s, I guess, I dunno it’s just constantly thinking about it and it’s just in the back of my mind if like anything like if I have a little bit of a belly ache I’m like am I coming on and especially if I’m at school sometimes if I can’t concentrate that will be, I’ll start thinking about that and that’s mostly what t is and being a bit snappy so… are most of the problems from it.

Interviewer: OK, anything else?

Participant: No

Interviewer: OK well thank you very much. Is it OK for me to stop the recording?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, thank you very much.