

Sense of Coherence, Rather Than Exercise Capacity, is the Stronger Mediator to Obtain Health Related Quality of Life in Adults with Congenital

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Objective: Sense of coherence (SOC) is a psychological approach that focuses on factors that support human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause disease. It assumes its three components comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness are resources to enhance quality of life directly. This study aimed to evaluate the relationship between SOC and quality of life in adults with congenital heart disease (CHD) and to compare it with the relationship of exercise capacity and quality of life.

Patients and methods: From April 2010 to Mai 2011 we consecutively included 546 young adults (236 female, 26.9 years, range 16-71 years) with various CHD in the study. Patients completed the SOC-13 questionnaire and the health-related quality of life questionnaire SF-36. Afterwards they performed a cardiopulmonary exercise test.

Results: In adults with CHD, SOC was enhanced compared to reference values (CHD: 74,0 [63.8;81.0] vs. reference value: 69.7 [68.5;69.7] ; $p < .001$) corresponding to 106.1% [91.8;116.7%] of predicted reference value. SOC was not associated with the underlying heart defect ($p = .565$) or heart defect severity ($r = .044$; $p = .301$). It was moderately related to all dimensions of quality of life ($r = .260$ to $r = .686$, $p < .001$) except to health transition. It was only poorly associated with exercise capacity ($r = .098$; $p = .023$) and age ($r = -.097$; $p = .023$).

Conclusions: Adults with CHD have an enhanced SOC. SOC is moderately correlated with quality of life, and seems to be a stronger mediator of health related quality of life than exercise capacity. SOC might explain the rather good quality of life in patients with CHD despite their reduction in exercise capacity. Both must be focused on in the management of patients with CHD.