

# "My Belly Still Hurts"

Robert Vezzetti, MD, FAAP

Pediatric Emergency Medicine

Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas





# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- One of the more frustrating complaints.
- Is it really an emergency?
- What is the ED going to do about it?





# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- Chronic abdominal pain
- Functional abdominal pain
- Functional dyspepsia
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Abdominal migraine
- Functional abdominal pain syndrome



# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

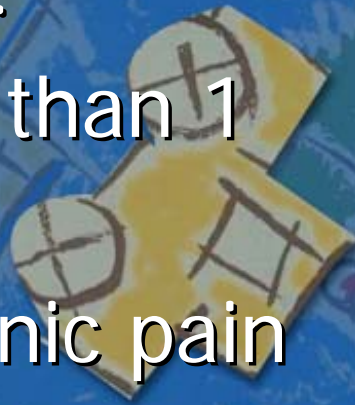
- Parental perspective...
- Primary physician perspective...
- Other involved physicians...
- Patient perspective....





# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- At least 3 pain episodes over the last 3 months interfering with function.
- In practice, pain that lasts more than 1 to 2 months.
- Whatever the parents think chronic pain is.





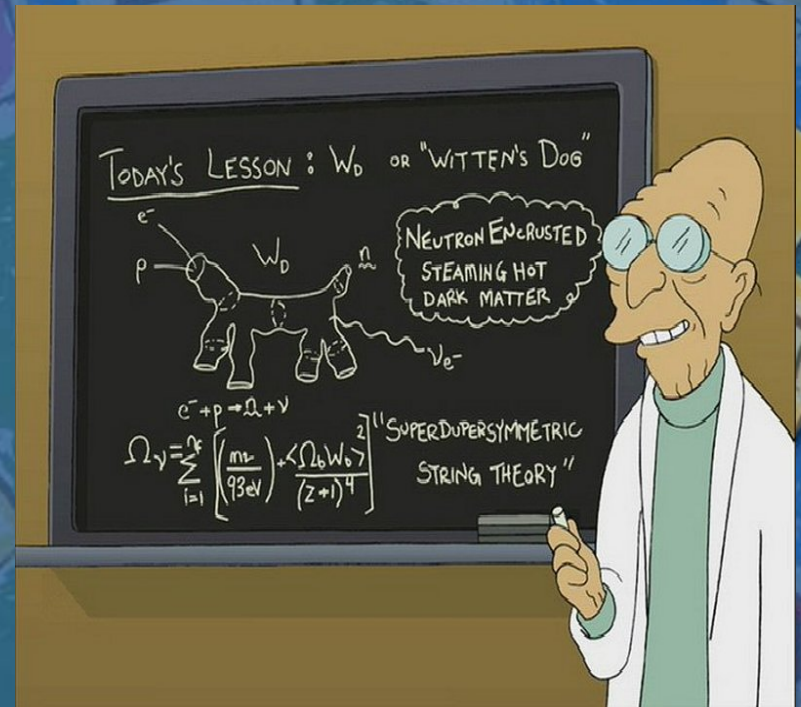
# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- Sick or not sick...
- Functional.
- Anatomic.
- Metabolic.
- Infectious.
- Inflammatory.
- Neoplastic.



# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- Anxiety, depression, behavior problems or recent negative life events do not seem to help distinguish between functional and organic causes of abdominal pain.
- Although kids with chronic pain are more likely to have other symptoms, this also does not help distinguish functional from organic abdominal pain.





# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- Weight loss.
- Deceleration of linear growth.
- Blood loss.
- Significant vomiting.
- Severe diarrhea.
- Unexplained fever.
- Persistent quadrant pain.
- Family history.



# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- Bloodwork.
- Imaging.
- Psychosocial.





# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

- The majority of children with chronic abdominal pain do not have organic disease.
- Education is key in children with functional pain.
- Reasonable treatment goals.
- Medications.



# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective

## Take Home Points

- Functional abdominal pain is the most common cause of chronic abdominal pain.
- Can be correctly diagnosed and managed by a primary care physician in the absence of any concerning symptoms.
- The presence of concerning symptoms should prompt testing and appropriate referral.

# Chronic Abdominal Pain: The ED Perspective Take Home Points

- Psychosocial factors do not help distinguish between functional and organic causes of chronic pain but treatment should address these factors.
- Education is key.
- Reasonable treatment goals should be established.
- Medications should be used judiciously.