

Proposal for a Paediatric Pain Special Interest Group – South Africa

Poorly treated pain leads to long-term physical, physiological and psychological consequences, and has emerged as a public health issue. Yet, evidence that pain is not well managed in the paediatric population is overwhelming, and studies show that pain in hospitalised children is common (86%) and is often moderate to severe (40%). Research reveals that paediatric surgical patients are a particularly vulnerable group, and report pain more frequently. Establishing comprehensive pain services has made significant strides in addressing these deficiencies, and children's hospitals abroad have set the standard in this regard. In South Africa, we lag behind the international community with regards to paediatric pain management. Comprehensive pain services are not established, and don't have buy in from the key stakeholders.

We have come to appreciate that the experience and clinical presentation of pain is a multifactorial one with genetic, socio-economic and cultural factors all playing a contributory role. In this regard our patient population may differ substantially from those already well studied. The paucity of data from a South African context forces us to relate our practice to research conducted abroad, which is not always practical or appropriate.

Paediatric pain assessment and management is challenging and complex, but is immensely rewarding and has significant benefits for patients, families, clinicians and hospitals. Establishing a Special Interest Group to address the specific needs of our paediatric population can provide a platform to start addressing these challenges, in an interdisciplinary way.

Objectives:

- To make paediatric pain management a priority – at clinical, managerial and governmental levels.
- To promote education and awareness about pain in children for patients, the public and healthcare professionals.
- To change attitudes and perceptions about pain in children.
- To draft and share locally relevant information about paediatric pain management – protocols, guidelines, teaching tools, resources.
- To create and encourage pain educators and pain champions, and to create opportunities to enhance the skills of those delivering pain education.
- To provide an interdisciplinary forum for debate and collaborative research and development around pain education and strategies.
- To encourage research which focuses on paediatric pain in South Africa, that can have local and international impact.
- Organise meetings, seminars and workshops on pain education.

Composition:

Anyone in the medical community who has a passion or expresses an interest in paediatric pain management. This includes, but is not limited to;

- paediatricians
- anaesthetists
- nurses
- neurologists
- rheumatologists
- oncologists
- surgeons
- palliative care practitioners
- emergency medicine practitioners – doctors, nurses, paramedics, EMS staff
- physiotherapists
- occupational therapists
- clinical pharmacists
- psychologists
- psychiatrists
- biokineticists
- play therapists
- child life specialists
- hospital managers