

UCI anesthesiologist to lead study on alleviating surgical anxiety, pain in children

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A UC Irvine anesthesiologist will use a \$3.2 million National Institutes of Health grant to launch a research effort aimed at lessening the anxiety and pain children feel before and after surgery.

Dr. Zeev Kain, professor and chair of anesthesiology & perioperative care, will establish his Provider-Tailored Intervention for Perioperative Stress program at four California children's hospitals. P-TIPS is designed to promote specific behaviors in adults – doctors and parents alike – that will create a calmer surgical environment for youngsters.

"Some 4 million children undergo surgery in the U.S. each year, and up to 65 percent of them experience significant anxiety and distress before surgery," said Kain, a national leader in perioperative biopsychosocial research.

"Not only is this traumatic for these young patients, but it also contributes to increased postoperative [pain](#) and delayed hospital discharge. A program like P-TIPS is specifically tailored to improve pediatric surgical outcomes."

Under P-TIPS, surgical staff and anesthesiologists are trained to integrate positive behaviors into their interactions with pediatric patients and their parents – such as using humor, eye contact and simple medical language.

"It's important that healthcare providers not overwhelm children with

complicated medical jargon or overly reassuring statements," Kain said. "We've found that a friendly and direct conversational approach lowers undesirable stress and anxiety."

The P-TIPS study will involve UC Irvine Medical Center-CHOC Children's Hospital, Children's Hospital Los Angeles, UC San Diego-Rady Children's Hospital San Diego, and Packard Children's [Hospital](#) at Stanford.

Additionally, Kain is utilizing another NIH grant to create and implement a unique Internet site to help parents ease children's anxiety (and their own), properly handle postsurgical pain and, ultimately, facilitate healing. Web-based Tailored Intervention Preparation for Surgery will provide detailed information for parents about surgical procedures and postoperative pain management. WebTIPS will also develop a personalized plan for alleviating [anxiety](#) and pain, taking into account other medical and psychological factors, such as the parents' coping and caring skills.

Provided by University of California - Irvine

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