

New website helps parents manage children's pain after surgery

February 21 2013, by Juliana Bunim



(Medical Xpress)—When a young child has surgery, parents rely on doctors and nurses for advice on how to prepare and support children during the procedure and immediately afterwards. But once that child gets home, parents are left with little guidance on how to best help their children cope with pain.

A new website aims to fill that information [gap](#) and give parents the

framework for how to be more effective caregivers for children after surgery.

Created with Linda Franck, RN, PhD, chair of Family Health Care Nursing in UC San Francisco's School of Nursing, the website My Child is in [Pain](#) targets parents of children between the ages of 2 and 6 who want to know how to help manage their child's post-operative pain.

"There are very few formal resources for parents to learn how to tell if their child is in pain and what they can do to relieve it," said Franck.

More than 80 percent of the more than 3 million children's [surgeries](#) in the U.S. are performed on an outpatient basis, leaving parents to manage post-operative pain at home. But returning home can be scary when parents aren't confident about how to determine if their child is in pain, and children aren't equipped with the [language skills](#) to fully articulate how they are feeling.

Franck's research has shown that more than 90 percent of children have pain two days after surgery and as much as 25 percent have pain four weeks after. Children with post-operative pain also were more likely to have [problematic behaviors](#) such as not sleeping, eating poorly and being very anxious.

"Parents are not getting enough information or feeling comfortable using the information that's out there to manage pain at home," said Franck. "It became clear we needed to put together another resource using the best [research evidence](#) available and lots of parent input so that it was practical and useful for parents."

Franck has dedicated her career to pioneering [pain assessment](#) and [management techniques](#) for acutely and chronically ill infants and children. Her research highlights the information needs of parents when

their children are in pain, and suggests innovative strategies for enhancing the partnership between parents and professionals to ensure children receive optimal pain care.

Through a series of videos, text and illustrations, the website helps parents understand how [children](#) respond to pain and guides them through how to tell if their child is in pain. It provides detailed information and practical advice on some of the simple but effective things they can do to provide effective comfort and manage their child's pain. The website also explains how pain is signalled to the brain, how common pain medications work, what times are best to administer the medication and what to do if it's not working. The site is funded by the United Kingdom-based non-profit [WellChild](#).

"When a child's pain is well managed, he or she usually recovers more quickly," said Franck. "Simple comfort techniques can be very effective. Gently rocking and stroking their child can be soothing and help their child to relax, and when a child is relaxed and calm, it can help the pain go away. Also, letting their child make some decisions can help them feel less anxious and more in control."

Provided by University of California, San Francisco

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