

DALHOUSIE PAIN DAY (MAY 3RD, 2013) – ABSTRACT SUBMISSION FORM

Abstract Title: Parents who experience their child's chronic pain as highly threatening and distressing have a higher priority for pain control goals

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Abstract (max. 250 words): When parents are confronted with their child's pain, pursuing the goal of controlling child pain is likely to be prioritized- at the expense of pursuing other goals. However, in the context of chronic pain, it may be more beneficial for child daily functioning if parents find a flexible balance between pain-control and other important goals. The current study investigated whether flexibly switching from pain-controlling goals towards other valued goals in the child's life (e.g., school, leisure-related) is particularly difficult to achieve in parents who highly catastrophize and feel distressed about child pain. Twenty-two parents of a child with chronic tension headache ($N=2$) or functional abdominal pain ($N=20$; 23% boys; $M_{age}=9.09$; $M_{pain\ duration}=20.21$) reported on their catastrophic thoughts, distress experience, and child-related goal priorities and -flexibility in response to child pain during a home visit. : Spearman correlation analyses indicated that high levels of parental catastrophic thinking and distress feelings were both associated with prioritizing pain-control goals and being less flexible to adjust their pain-control goals. Moreover, heightened distress in parents was also associated with more difficulties in pursuing other important goals in their child's life. Further qualitative analyses will be performed to assess thematic content of goals generated by the parent. These findings provide preliminary evidence indicating that parents who catastrophize about child pain and experience child pain as highly distressing might be at risk to persevere in pursuing pain-control goals, which may be dysfunctional, particularly in the context of repeated failed attempts to control child pain.

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