

UCI Center on Stress & Health receives NIH funding to develop digital health interventions

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Funding will advance digital methods to alleviate pediatric surgery stress and pain

Researchers at the University of California, Irvine's Center on Stress & Health have received \$6.3 million in grants from the National Institutes of Health to develop and test digital health interventions for stress and pain in children facing surgical procedures and those battling cancer.

Dr. Michelle Fortier, associate professor of anesthesiology & perioperative care and co-director of the UCI Center on Stress & Health, was awarded a \$3.2 million NIH grant over five years to examine the effectiveness of a web-based pain and symptom management tool for children receiving primarily outpatient cancer treatment. She secured initial funding to develop the electronic intervention, called Pain Buddy, from the American Cancer Society.

It's an important endeavor, Fortier said, given the large number of juvenile cancer diagnoses annually; the significant undertreatment of pain in this population; and the effects of pain on youngsters' physical, social and emotional health.

"This intervention not only has the potential to impact the tens of thousands of children diagnosed with cancer each year, but also has widespread applicability to manage pain associated with a variety of illnesses," she said.

The center's director, Dr. Zeev Kain, Chancellor's Professor of anesthesiology & perioperative care, was awarded \$3.1 million over five years. His project is an interactive website for children undergoing outpatient surgery and their families. WebTIPS will develop personalized plans for alleviating anxiety and pain, taking into account medical and psychological factors, such as the surgical procedure and the parents' coping and caring skills.

Kain noted that millions of children in the U.S. have surgery every year, and many of them feel significant stress, anxiety and pain. WebTIPS, he said, will improve the clinical process, enhance the family experience and lower costs.

"This innovative, mobile-based program will transform the way we handle children and their families during the surgical course," Kain said. After WebTIPS is tested, he plans to disseminate it to all U.S. operative facilities serving kids.

The Center on Stress & Health is devoted to discovering ways to improve quality of life for children and adults undergoing surgery and children with cancer. Center members include investigators from various schools at UCI as well as researchers from Yale University, CHOC Children's Hospital, the University of Washington, Stanford University, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Chapman University and Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

Source:

[UCI Center on Stress & Health awarded \\$6.3 million by National Institutes of Health](#)