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Project: Choosing the right model of care together: Informing an equitable, patient-oriented decision aid for in-person vs virtual care of pediatric chronic pain



Background

Chronic pain is a public health concern that affects 1 in 5 Canadian youth. Pediatric chronic pain is associated with poorer physical, social, academic, and emotional functioning with long-lasting impact in adulthood. Therefore, it is crucial to address chronic pain early.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare professionals pivoted to virtual care to continue treatment delivery. However, not all youth may benefit from virtual care; in particular, youth in equity-seeking groups (e.g., racialized individuals, people with disabilities) are at higher risk for chronic pain but face greater barriers in accessing technology necessary for virtual treatment. Moreover, little evidence exists to guide treatment decisions regarding in-person versus virtual care for pediatric pain. Shared decision-making (SDM) is a collaborative approach that could improve outcomes by involving patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals in treatment decision-making. Our project aims to promote SDM by creating a decision aid for in-person versus virtual care for pediatric chronic pain. In doing so,

this project addresses the patient-identified needs of improving SDM for in-person versus virtual care and reducing health disparities in pediatric chronic pain management.

To inform the development of a decision aid and include diverse populations, this project will: (1) examine current SDM practices for in-person versus virtual care by surveying pediatric chronic pain clinics around the world; and (2) interview youth with chronic pain (including youth who identify as Black or persons of colour, have complex medical needs and/or neurodevelopmental disabilities), their caregivers, and multidisciplinary healthcare professionals, to learn about the critical features of a decision aid for pediatric chronic pain. By engaging and collaborating with patients, their voices and values will be incorporated into the decision aid.

The co-produced decision aid prototype will facilitate SDM for in-person versus virtual care for pediatric chronic pain. Knowledge mobilization activities co-led by patient and organizational partners (e.g., Solutions for Kids in Pain, Pain BC, Cassie & Friends, Children's Healthcare Canada, CHILD-BRIGHT, Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario, and The ILC Charitable Foundation) will generate awareness and use of the decision aid to improve health outcomes and promote equitable care for youth with chronic pain.

Mica Gabrielle Marbil is a Master of Science student in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Calgary. She is supervised by Dr. Kathryn (Katie) Birnie, and is a trainee in the Partnering For Pain laboratory. Mica completed her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology, First Class, at the University of Calgary, where she examined posttraumatic headache in children with mild traumatic brain injury. As an aspiring researcher, Mica hopes to address the systemic inequities that disproportionately affect the experiences and outcomes of equity-seeking groups living with chronic pain. Aside from a 2023 AbSPORU Graduate Studentship in Patient-Oriented Research, Mica is also the recipient of a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Canada Graduate Scholarships Master's Award.