



**Christine Chambers and her team are exploring many facets of children's pain, so they can provide caregivers and health professionals with effective ways to reduce children's suffering from pain.**

## Dr. Christine Chambers Centre for Pediatric Pain Research

**Alleviating children's pain: Dr. Christine Chambers explores how parents and professionals help children cope with pain**

Children commonly experience pain, from routine needles and the ordinary scrapes and bruises of growing up, to severe pain caused by injury or disease. On top of this, as many as 20 per cent of children suffer from chronic pain. Children with chronic pain often develop sleep problems that can affect mood and school performance, and may grow up to become adults with chronic pain.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Christine Chambers is examining many complex issues of children's pain, with a talented team of trainees and research assistants in the IWK Centre for Pediatric Pain Research. She and her team want to improve the ability of parents and health professionals to both gauge and minimize children's pain.

"We're using our evidence to design effective ways of helping children cope with pain, particularly during medical procedures," notes Christine, who holds a Canada Research Chair in Child Health. "This is important, because people with painful memories of childhood health care experiences often avoid medical care throughout their lives."

Christine and her team garnered world-wide media coverage for their finding that psychological strategies—like distraction—are among the best ways to help children during painful procedures. Likewise, their finding that parents' reassurances actually make children feel worse during painful procedures attracted widespread media interest after it was featured in the journal *Pain*.

Trainees are working with Christine to explore many other psychological aspects of children's pain—such as how mothers and fathers react differently to their children's pain, and how anxiety influences children's memories of pain and their subsequent experiences with pain. They are also exploring the relationships between sleep and pain, and how children develop empathy for others' pain and distress.

"We're shedding light on developmental, social and psychological factors that impact children's pain, whether they're in hospital or on the playground," says Christine. "Our aim is to help parents, caregivers and health professionals better understand, recognize and empathize with children's pain, and to provide them with specific strategies they can use to reduce children's suffering."

An associate professor in Psychology and Psychiatry at Dalhousie University, Christine mentors PhD students in clinical psychology, postdoctoral fellows and masters students in psychology, nursing, and speech-language pathology, and undergraduate students in medicine and psychology. She completed her training at Dalhousie University and the University of British Columbia. She holds substantial peer-reviewed funding; she and her trainees have received many awards and accolades for their work.