



“Managing pain in kids is not just a nice thing to do.”

An interview with Dr. Christine Chambers,
Scientific Director of SKIP

Christine Chambers, PhD RPsych, is the Canada Research Chair (Tier 1) in Children's Pain and Killam Professor in the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Neuroscience and Psychology at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her award-winning work spans research, training, knowledge translation, and advocacy.

2/3 of children in hospital experience painful procedures with NO pain management. Why?

There are many reasons. As recently as the 1970s and 1980s it was believed that babies, especially premature babies, didn't feel pain. We've come a long way, but we're still failing children when it comes to pain.

The good news is that Canada is a world leader in research about children's pain and there are many evidence-based solutions. There are simple, easy, and cost effective things patients, parents, caregivers, and health professionals can do to help children have less pain — IF they knew about them. The goal of SKIP is to get that information out there.

What are some examples?

SKIP will address knowledge to practice gaps in all areas of children's pain. Inadequate pain management is reported for children in many contexts, including during routine vaccinations, while undergoing medical procedures, after surgery, and in the context of chronic pain and disease. We consider the three Ps of pain management: physical, psychological, and pharmacological.

Evidence-based strategies for babies include breastfeeding, skin-to-skin contact, and sucrose (sugar water) during painful procedures. For older children, strategies include distraction, deep breathing, relaxation, and medications like numbing cream for vaccinations. We think of needles as “Quick! Get it done!” But if we restrain a child, what happens next time?

Why is SKIP's work so important?

People who work with children love children — no one wants to see them suffer, but many don't know there's another way. Health professionals often don't have much training in pain management, and sometimes pain management isn't part of the culture of an institution.

Managing pain in kids is not just a nice thing to do. We know now from decades of research that poorly managed pain, especially early in life, has a negative impact on children's brains and bodies. They are at risk of experiencing more pain as adults, avoiding necessary health care like vaccinations, and developing more complex problems with pain and addiction. When evidence-based methods aren't used, the risks go up.

Why does SKIP focus on health care institutions and health professionals as well as patients, caregivers, and the general public?

The SKIP approach is a whole new way to mobilize knowledge in health care. When you have a patient and/or caregiver who feels empowered, health professionals who are armed with information, and health centres that prioritize children's pain, outcomes are improved.

As a researcher — or “knowledge producer” — I'm SKIP's Scientific Director. I work in close partnership with SKIP's Knowledge User Director, Doug Maynard from Children's Healthcare Canada, who represents “knowledge users” like hospitals, health professionals, and administrators. Together, we can push boundaries and really think outside the box of traditional health care. SKIP is going to facilitate collaboration between patients, caregivers, researchers, health professionals, institutions, and partners like start-ups and government — and mix them together in a really synergistic way. 🧠

“Better pain management in children means healthier Canadians for life.”

An interview with **Doug Maynard**,
Knowledge User Director of SKIP

Doug Maynard is Associate Director, Business Development for Children's Healthcare Canada. Children's Healthcare Canada member organizations deliver health services to children and youth, and include regional health authorities, children's hospitals, community hospitals, children's treatment centres and home/respite care providers.



Why is Children's Healthcare Canada involved in SKIP?

There is a well-established body of existing research on children's pain, and a lot of what we know from this research is not being used in the clinical setting. Much of this work is being done by researchers in hospitals within our membership. Through SKIP, Children's Healthcare Canada and researchers like Dr. Chambers can help connect clinicians and researchers to drive change in organizations and throughout the healthcare system.

How can we put knowledge into practice, so health professionals know what to do to help make children's pain better?

We often think that health professionals are constantly accessing

and implementing new research. But we know it can take as long as 17 years for new research to reach the patients and caregivers who will benefit from it! Sometimes a parent knows about a new pain management practice, but is confronted by a resistant health professional. Sometimes it's the health professional who has the best information, but works within an organization that lacks the tools and resources to implement it. Barriers can be found at any level in the healthcare system. SKIP will work to empower patients and caregivers, ensure health professionals have access to the best information, support healthcare administrators in creating environments that support change, and help the healthcare system as a whole embrace new ways of managing children's pain.

What does this work mean for children and families?

Better pain management leads to healthier Canadians. Part of what we have to overcome is the idea that pain isn't a big deal — or a culture that suggests that pain “builds character” and can even be “good” for children. It's about helping people realize that there are significant and long term consequences to not addressing pain, and there are simple things you can do to help children: things that don't cost anything or take any extra time. 🌱

Children's pain affects all Canadians, either directly or by impacts on the health care system. Are you a scientist or researcher, or part of a company or organization with resources, technology, or expertise to share? Are you a patient, caregiver, health professional, or policymaker interested in improving children's pain management? Join the SKIP knowledge mobilization network!

Did you know?



$\frac{2}{3}$ of children in hospital experience painful procedures without any pain management

Did you know?



75% of parents say they don't know how to manage their children's pain

Did you know?



Veterinarians get 5x more training in pain than people doctors do

Did you know?



Only 2 Canadian health institutions have made a certified commitment to pain management

“Things could have been done differently.”

An interview with **Isabel Jordan**,
SKIP Patient Partner

Isabel Jordan is an advocate for patients and caregivers in children's health. She lives in Squamish, BC with her son Zachary, daughter Evie, and husband Tyler. Isabel is one of the founding members of the Rare Disease Foundation and now serves as Board Chair.



Why did you get involved with SKIP?

My son Zachary is 17. He has an ultra-rare genetic disease, so we've been dealing with hospitals and healthcare systems since he was a year and half old. We had all these incredibly problematic experiences with procedural pain. In the moment, we were given no options. Looking back, I can see that we were made complicit in contributing to his pain, by holding him down and forcing him through things rather than helping him through things. It led to all these effects on him and the people around him. I have been diagnosed with medical PTSD, and both Zachary and his sister have been traumatized.

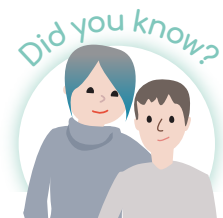
I now know there are evidence-based solutions and things could have been done differently. The thought that all this research is happening and it's just sitting there on a shelf makes me angry! I know other families are going through this.

Why is SKIP important?

We need to change clinical practice. Even when parents and caregivers know the best ways to manage their child's pain, it's vulnerable and scary to go up against someone with power and say, "I know how to do this better." Treatments and procedures run better, patients are happier, and things happen faster if people are not scared or traumatized. I believe this deep down in my soul — that people will have better experience on both sides of the gurney.

How is Zachary doing today?

Zachary is not able to go to school, but has a teacher coming once a week. He is passionate about history and politics, and wakes up early every morning to read the news. He's very much into learning and reading and gaming, which is a great distraction for his pain and nausea. He's a remarkably even-keeled human being. 🧡



SKIP is committed to a patients-included approach.

Patients and caregivers are engaged at every level of the project: management, activities, and on our board of directors.

Solutions for Kids in Pain (SKIP) is a knowledge mobilization network, based at Dalhousie University and co-led by Children's Healthcare Canada, that seeks to bridge the gap between current treatment practices and available evidence-based solutions for children's pain in Canadian health institutions.

Canada is a world leader in children's pain research. SKIP's mandate is to mobilize that knowledge to the people who need it: patients, caregivers, health professionals, healthcare institutions, policymakers, and the general public.

Mission:

To improve children's pain management by mobilizing evidence-based solutions through coordination and collaboration.

Vision:

Healthier Canadians through better pain management for children.

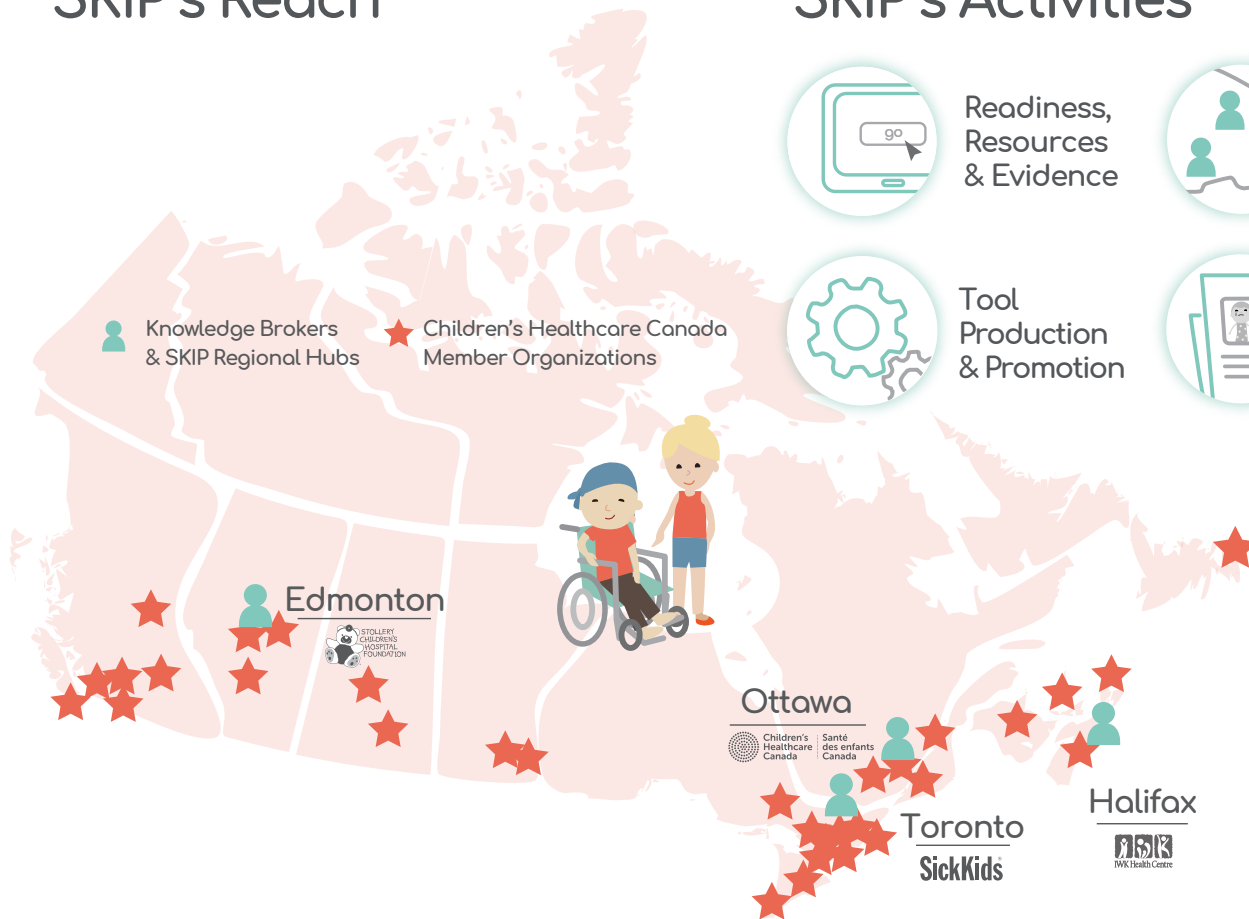


Be part of the solution.
Join the SKIP knowledge mobilization network!

SKIP's Impact



SKIP's Reach



SKIP's Activities



Get involved! Say hello! Learn more! contact@kidsinpain.ca

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