



# Research Article *of the Month*

Dagg W, et al. **Parents' management of adolescent patients' postoperative pain after discharge: a qualitative study.** Can J Pain 2020;4(3):51-60. doi: 10.1080/24740527.2020.1783524

## *In a Nutshell:*

**Caregivers may feel overwhelmed and under-supported when helping their child manage their postoperative pain after major surgery.**

Caregivers could benefit from receiving more education and support from healthcare teams about managing their child's pain and how to help their child return back to school. Referrals to transitional pain clinics may also be necessary.

**Postoperative pain management at home can be hard for families**



## *The Details:*

**This qualitative study sought to better understand how caregivers help their child recover from major surgery.**

This study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with caregivers of children aged 12 to 18 years old, whose children had undergone inpatient surgery in the past 6 months. 7 participants were recruited, and the data gathered was analyzed using thematic content analysis.

Caregivers and their children often **reported anxiety about returning home**, as the caregiver often felt their child was too unwell to leave the hospital; families reported feeling forced to leave the hospital to make space for other patients regardless of how the child was recovering.

At home, many caregivers **reported feeling surprised at the intensity and duration of their child's pain.** They felt they did not have the knowledge or skills to adequately manage their child's pain. Not all parents felt able to use nonpharmacologic pain management strategies, and many relied solely on their child spontaneously asking for pain medicines, rather than feeling comfortable using a child-facing pain assessment tool.

The majority of caregivers reported that their child's pain lasted greater than 3 months, yet none received follow-up with a transitional pain clinic. Such referrals are important to help improve the long-term pain outcomes of postoperative patients after major surgery (e.g., spinal fusion, pectus excavatum repair).

