



*SKIP launches a new project called 'Youth in Pain' to share evidence-based solutions for the medical use of opioids to treat youth in pain*

**Ottawa – November 3, 2023** – Today, [Solutions for Kids in Pain \(SKIP\)](#) launched its new project to share solutions for the effective, safe, and equitable medical use of opioids to address short and long-term pain in youth. Funded by [Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program \(SUAP\)](#), 'Youth in Pain: Solutions for effective opioid use', was developed in response to Health Canada's 2021 [Action Plan for Pain](#) and guided by SKIP's [2020 Opioids and Our Children national scoping meeting](#).

Two out of three children in Canada experience painful medical procedures without any pain management, and one in five children live with long-term pain. Though managing pediatric pain can be challenging, taking steps to deliver care that mitigates this pain early in a child's life can have long-lasting impacts, including a reduction in challenges with mental health or substance use later in life.

Opioids should not be the first or the only option for pain management for youth; however, they can be an important tool. The Youth in Pain project is focused on the evidence-based use of opioids as part of quality pediatric pain care. Quality pain care includes using psychological and physical treatments as well as medications together. Appropriate prescribing and use of opioids for pain in youth is a key component of Canada's first national [Pediatric Pain Management health standard](#), published by SKIP and the Health Standards Organization earlier this year.

"Youth in Canada experience untreated and preventable pain at times due to stigma and fear about opioid prescribing and use," said Dr. Katie Birnie, Clinical Psychologist and Associate Scientific Director for SKIP. "Health professionals, families, and decision-makers can work together so all evidence-based solutions for pain, including opioids when appropriate, are considered without judgment." SKIP and the Youth in Pain project aims to begin filling this gap.

"Our government is pleased to support organizations like Solutions for Kids in Pain (SKIP) for their tremendous work and dedication in providing children and kids resources and guidance, including around providing the necessary medication to manage their pain," said Ya'ara Saks, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health.

"I have friends who need medications for all kinds of illnesses, but I'm the only one who feels the need to lie and keep my pain medications a secret because of all the rude comments that follow. I shouldn't have to be ashamed of needing opioids as someone with a chronic illness, and it makes me sad that it's looked down upon when it makes such a difference in my life. Opioids are sometimes the difference between me lying in bed, wishing I could live a normal life, and me living a normal life," said Ariana, a SKIP youth partner.



“I would like to see prescribers pay as much attention to the pain kids have as they do to the potential complications of opioids. Families and patients need to be involved in weighing the risks and benefits of whether these medications should be taken, as opposed to being made to feel we are bad for trying to get medication that works,” said Natalie, a SKIP parent partner.

Throughout the Youth in Pain Project, SKIP is working with youth and caregivers, health professionals, decision-makers, and diverse organizational partners to develop new resources and share information focused on the medical use of opioids as an important tool to effectively, safely, and equitably manage pain for youth, to the benefit of all Canadians.

Solutions for Kids in Pain (SKIP) is a national knowledge mobilization network whose mission is to improve pain management in children through coordination and collaboration, co-led by Children’s Healthcare Canada and hosted at Dalhousie University and with hubs across the country.

For more information on the Youth in Pain project, please visit the dedicated page on SKIP’s website here: <https://kidsinpain.ca/youth-in-pain/>

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