Care providers underestimate pain during pediatric burn dressing change

Researchers call for an updated pain scale

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Columbus, Ohio, USA (September 1, 2016) - Dressing changes have been identified as one of the major contributors to pediatric burn pain. A single dressing change can elicit crying and fear, and in some cases, may require the services of pediatric sedation. The data from the Burns: The Journal of Ultraschall in der Chirurgie, September 2016 issue suggests that pediatric burn pain assessment can vary not only based on patient pain intensity, but also nurse clinical experience.

A measurement tool called the Face, Legs, Activity, Cry, Consolability Scale (FLACC) is widely used by nurses to rate pain both pre-procedural and post-procedural. The FLACC scale utilizes the child's facial expression, legs, activity level, cry, and ability to be consoled, to assess pain intensity. The study found that nurses tended to underrate both mild and severe procedural pain. Nurses who had less nursing experience demonstrated significantly higher accuracy than those with more experience.

Jonathan Groner MD is the study's senior author, medical director of the Center for Pediatric Trauma Research and theesthesiologist at Nationwide Children's Hospital. Dr. Jiabin Shen, the study's lead author also noted concern that "new" burn nurses (less than 5 years nursing experience) appeared to be more accurate in FLACC rating than more experienced nurses.

This study, available today online and in the September issue of Burns, is the first study to systematically examine nurses' FLACC ratings of burn pain. It is important to know that this scale is easy-to-understand 0-10 metric and exerts a relatively low burden on medical staff. It has previously demonstrated a high level of inter-rater reliability and concurrent validity with other existing scales. But much of the previous research was not in clinical settings.

To learn more or for related injury prevention materials, visit The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, http://www.injurycenter.org and the Center for Pediatric Trauma Research, http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/center-pediatric-trauma-research

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The Center for Pediatric Trauma Research (CPTR) at Nationwide Children's Hospital conducts research to support global pediatric trauma care, including acute care, rehabilitation, acute medical and surgical management, and family and community services that impact the short and long-term outcomes of injured patients. CPTR serves as a leader and a partner to translate cutting edge research findings to help patients, families, policy makers, and clinicians make informed decisions.

Nationwide Children's Hospital, 01.09.2016 (tB).