

# New iPad app helps children and young people with JIA communicate their pain experiences

June 11 2015

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The results of a study presented today at the European League Against Rheumatism Annual Congress (EULAR 2015) demonstrated the value of a new interactive iPad app that helps young people with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) describe their pain. Almost all of the children preferred the new digital tool, aptly titled 'This Feeling', to other conventional methods and felt it was an interesting and engaging way to communicate about their experiences of pain.<sup>1</sup>

"It is vital for children and [young people](#) to be able to communicate about their [pain](#) in order for them to access the best possible support to manage their condition long term," said Professor Wendy Thomson, Inflammatory Arthritis in Children Lead at the NIHR Manchester Musculoskeletal Biomedical Research Unit, UK. "'This Feeling!' uses familiar technology that children and young people are comfortable with, encouraging them to describe the pain type, intensity, location, spread and emotional impact at a given time, by using an interactive manikin, adjustable pain icons, facial expressions, drawing tools and free text description. The app is a simple multidimensional approach to pain management that allows those with JIA to communicate the intricacies of their pain."

Pain is the most common symptom of JIA<sup>1</sup>, causing distress and negatively impacting on a child's physical, social and emotional wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> It is subjective, making it a challenge to comprehend how

much pain someone is in, or the type of pain they are experiencing. This is a greater challenge in children, as they may be yet to develop the verbal communication tools needed to articulate how they feel.

"Despite advances in the diagnosis and treatment of JIA, pain is still poorly managed and this is distressing for both children and their parents. For every individual the feeling is unique, which can be hard to explain effectively, and for children, communication barriers also play a key role," added Professor Thomson.

Young people aged between 5 and 16 were recruited as part of the Childhood Arthritis Prospective Study (CAPS) to compare conventional self-report measures (Visual Analogue Scale and The Faces Pain Scale, revised) with 'This Feeling!'. A cross-sectional design using mixed methods, including semi-structured interviews, were administered to each young person attending an outpatient clinic.

Results show that 95% of [children](#) preferred using the app over the other conventional methods as it was easier and far more interesting to use.<sup>1</sup> Parents praised the app for capturing the complexity of pain in a child friendly way, which other conventional pain measures failed to do.

**More information:** Abstract Number: OP0157

Provided by European League Against Rheumatism

Citation: New iPad app helps children and young people with JIA communicate their pain experiences (2015, June 11) retrieved 20 November 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-06-ipad-app-children-young-people.html>

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