

# History of the Pain Research Unit



The Pain Research Unit at Sydney Children's Hospital (SCH) was founded by David Champion in the late 1980's. After 25 years of enthusiastic and tireless leadership, Associate Professor Champion has now reduced his time working in the research unit. Since January 2014, Dr Tiina Jaaniste heads the research team.

The early focus of the Pain Research Unit was primarily on children's self-report and behavioural measures of pain intensity. Through his work in the Rheumatology Department, Dr Champion and colleagues such as Dr John Ziegler, considered what health professionals were responding to when making global assessments of pain based on children's behavioural responses. Investigations were carried out to determine whether children were able to provide reliable and valid information about their pain intensity levels. An appreciation of the ability of children to provide meaningful self-report information about pain intensity led to researchers in the Pain Research Unit developing the Faces Pain Scale (FPS). The FPS, and more specifically the 6-face revised version of the scale (the Faces Pain Scale – Revised), has become one of the most widely used pain assessment tools for children worldwide. (Insert link to [www.iasp-pain.org/FPSR](http://www.iasp-pain.org/FPSR) )

Over many years, the team used the needle pain model for examining child and parental influences on children's pain outcomes. Children's ability to draw distinction between pain-related anxiety and pain intensity was considered. Our team found parental influences on pain-related distress following immunisation injections to be strongly evident as early as 4 to 6 months of age, and that brief parental guidance could improve outcomes.

Over the years, the Pain Research Unit's research interests have diversified. The team has developed particular expertise in areas such as: twin studies and paediatric pain; children's attention and distraction; information provision; somatosensory testing in children, and pain and the family.

In 2003 the Pain Research Unit was honoured to host the 6<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Paediatric Pain in Sydney. A.Prof David Champion and Dr Belinda Goodenough were co-convenors, with A.Prof Champion also chairing the Scientific Program Committee. Tiina Jaaniste was the Secretary of the Steering Committee.

Up until 2007, the Pain Research Unit was a relatively independent unit funded through grants, donations and a fund-raising committee. In 2007, the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation Gold Dinner and supplementary State Government funding enabled paediatric pain research to be incorporated into the Department of Pain and Palliative Care and supported as part of the broader department. This not only provided greater funding security, but also ensured a close and mutually beneficial link between the research and practice that is carried out in the team.