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Children with chronic pain miss out on services

Pain in children and adolescents remains under-recognised, under-estimated, under-treated and under-researched according to a leading paediatric pain specialist.

South Australian anaesthetist and specialist pain medicine physician, Dr Meredith Craigie, will tell this weekend's Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) spring meeting in Queensland that the problem of chronic pain in children and adolescents is not being adequately addressed.

Between 25 to 35 per cent of children experience chronic pain, with the incidence increasing during adolescence, especially for young girls. About five per cent of children have moderate to severe pain, with headaches, abdominal pain, limb pain and complex regional pain syndrome the most common causes.

Dr Craigie, an FPM board member, says many people do not believe that children suffer chronic pain and are dismissive of their concerns.

"Often children are accused of feigning things to get out of activities, especially adolescent girls who get called drama queens and other pejorative terms," Dr Craigie says.

Dr Craigie will call for greater funding, research and recognition of paediatric pain across Australia and New Zealand. She says each capital city should have a properly-funded paediatric chronic pain service that can provide a full range of services, which only occurs at present in Sydney and Melbourne.

"The amount of research in the paediatric arena compared to what happens in adult pain medicine is a drop in the ocean," Dr Craigie says.

She says children with chronic pain often drop out of school or are home-schooled, can become socially withdrawn and isolated, fail to achieve their academic potential and miss job opportunities. Their families are also affected, with parents missing work and siblings marginalised.

"If we can get in early and assist these young people, then maybe we can help them lead more functional lives as adults and achieve better outcomes," Dr Craigie says.

The FPM meeting begins tomorrow and runs until Sunday on the Sunshine Coast, with speakers including international expert on spinal pain and ethics, Dr Jerome Schofferman.

- **For more information or to request interviews with speakers, please contact ANZCA Media Manager Meaghan Shaw on +61 3 8517 5303, +61 408 259 369 or mshaw@anzca.edu.au. Follow us on Twitter [@ANZCA](https://twitter.com/ANZCA).**