Pages to the Pediatric Pain Service (the OUCH pager): Inappropriate Use Suggests the Need for Improved Pain Education

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Introduction

The pediatric pain service at our institution is staffed around the clock by pediatric anesthesia fellows or a nurse practitioner. Requests for consults are made via the OUCH pager held by a member of the pain service. Among non-anesthesia trainees, knowledge of pediatric pain management and appropriate use of the OUCH pager to request pain consults is variable. Therefore, the OUCH pager has often been used for non-consult purposes. We hypothesized that a large number of pages to the OUCH pager do not involve requests for new consults or consults/interventions requiring the expertise of an anesthesiology/pain management consultant.

Methods

- The study was approved by the CUMC IRB.
- The pediatric pain nurse practitioner was the sole individual who collected and categorized data on all OUCH pages over a five month period from May through September 2015 from 11 AM to 5 PM.
- Information collected included:
  - Professional designation of the caller (physicians in training, bedside nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants)
  - Service (surgical services, pediatric intensive care unit (PICU), general pediatric service)
  - Nature of call
  - Consults were then categorized as either “appropriate” (questions regarding current pain service patients or new consults requiring pain service intervention) or “inappropriate” (questions not regarding current pain service patients that should not require pain service intervention)

Results

- 260 pages were collected
- Inappropriate pages comprised the majority of all pages (61%, 159 pages)
- The most common caller type was a physician-in-training (66%, 172 pages)

Discussion

- The 24-hour OUCH pain consult pager is used appropriately in less than half of cases.
- This study highlights the need to provide more training and education in pain management for pediatric patients for non-anesthesia providers.
- We have therefore developed a mobile app which will provide more specific information regarding:
  - Pain assessment
  - Use of pain medications
  - Management of drug side effects
  - Guidance for properly requesting a consult
  - Information regarding patient controlled analgesia (PCAs)
- We plan to perform a follow-up study to evaluate whether a pain-related app made available to pediatric residents might provide them a resource for basic pain-related questions and therefore lead to more appropriate pages to the pediatric pain service.