

ORIGINAL PAPER**Promoting Parents' Use Of Non-Pharmacological Methods And Assessment Of Children's Postoperative Pain At Home**

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ABSTRACT

Background: Parents have reported challenges in assessing their child's postoperative pain at home.

Aims: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the usefulness of the parental use of the Parents' Postoperative Pain Measure -tool (PPPM) on 1-3 -year-old children's non-pharmacological pain alleviation at home.

Methodology: This was a non-randomized, prospective study with two parallel groups, where the parents in the intervention group were provided with PPPM in addition to a pain diary consisting of a verbal pain scale. The data were collected from 50 parents whose children had undergone day surgery in three Finnish university hospitals between January 2006 and June 2007. Parents completed questionnaires consisting of background information, verbal pain rating scale and a sub-scale measuring parents' use of non-pharmacological methods in children's postoperative pain alleviation.

Results: Most children had mild postoperative pain after discharge, but in some children pain was moderate or severe. Non-pharmacological interventions were used commonly for pain alleviation in both groups, including holding the child in lap, comforting the child and spending time with the child more than usual during the recovery period after discharge. However, the use of non-pharmacological pain alleviation methods was 15% more common in the intervention group than in the control group. Parents of the intervention group had carried the child ($p=0.04$) and used distraction ($p=0.05$) more commonly than parents in control group. No group differences were found in parental assessments of the helpfulness of non-pharmacological pain alleviation methods.

Conclusions: Children's pain remains under-treated and their pain alleviation can be promoted by providing the parents pain assessment tools, such as PPPM, to be used at home. The results can be utilized to further improve children's pain alleviation. More parental education is needed to promote their skills to alleviate the child's pain. Further research of the usefulness of the PPPM using larger samples is needed.

Key words: child, postoperative pain, parents, non-pharmacological methods, PPPM, quasi-experimental design