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State's First Kids-Only Emergency Room Finds Way to Treat Patients with Pain Faster

PHOENIX, Ariz. (July 7, 2006) – A research study at Phoenix Children's Hospital has revealed a way to tell how much pain a child is experiencing, giving Emergency Department doctors vital clues to identify and attend to a child's pain in a timelier manner. The study, by Blake Bulloch, MD, Pediatric Emergency Medicine Physician and Director of Emergency Department Research at Phoenix Children's, helped define what represents mild, moderate, and severe pain levels in children.

“Research says self report is the standard way for the medical community to measure a patient's pain. However, many children don't know how to describe their pain in words. At Phoenix Children's Hospital, we helped children describe their pain intensity and took notice of their severity. The defined pain numbers help Emergency Department staff determine the best order to treat patients,” said Bulloch.

The Hospital's Emergency Department asked 169 children (ages 5 to 16 years) who complained of pain to record the severity on the medically accepted Color Analogue Scale (CAS) for pain. Kids slid a marker along the 10 centimeters (cm) scale stopping at their pain level (white meant no pain; red indicated most pain). Medical staff flipped over the colored front and matched the marking to a numerical value on back.

The study found patients with mild pain reported a median score of 2.0 cm on the CAS scale. Children reporting moderate pain had a median score of 4.5 cm, and those with severe pain had a median score of 7.0 cm. This research suggests that kids with pain scores greater than or equal to 6.0 cm should receive more urgent triage levels.

Phoenix Children's was the first emergency department in Arizona designed exclusively for kids. With more than 55,000 visits annually, the 30-bed Emergency Department provides full-time pediatric emergency medicine trained physicians and nurses to care for Arizona's children. The department includes eight observation beds, a separate six-bed fast track area to treat non-urgent patients, two trauma/resuscitation rooms, and a 14-bed acute treatment center.

Phoenix Children's Hospital is Arizona's leader in pediatric care and is one of the 10 largest free-standing children's hospitals in the nation. The most comprehensive array of pediatric specialists in the State practice at this one organization. The outstanding clinical expertise, as well as high patient volume, and an unwavering commitment to caring only for children, all contribute to Children's leadership position. For information about Phoenix Children's, visit the Hospital's award-winning website at www.phoenixchildrens.com.