

News from the American Pain Society's □
27th Annual Scientific Meeting

For immediate release

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U.K. Research Shows Childhood Pain Trauma Unlikely To Cause Adult Chronic Pain

TAMPA, May 8, 2008 — Though some adults with chronic pain often say they experienced an adverse event in childhood (such as abuse), these events are no more common than amongst adults who are pain free, according to research presented today at the American Pain Society annual meeting.

In his plenary session address, Gary Macfarlane, MD, professor of epidemiology at University of Aberdeen (Scotland) School of Medicine, said that some pain patients hold perceptions that their pain stems from an adverse event in childhood and they more commonly remember such events.

“Adults with chronic pain rarely say their symptoms came on later in life and some attribute their pain to a traumatic episode or pain experience in childhood,” Macfarlane said. “You are more likely to recall adverse events in childhood if you’re not healthy, whereas healthy adults don’t harbor exact memories of such past events.”

Macfarlane’s research on 17,000 British children who were born in 1958 and who have been studied to adulthood did show some links between childhood and adulthood. Children who complained of multiple symptoms in childhood (abdominal pain, headache) were three times more likely to have chronic pain problems as adults than children who infrequently complained about pain.

Another link reported by Macfarlane is that babies who were treated in intensive care units and had invasive procedures showed different sensitivity to pain as children. “Around age

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10, individuals treated in ICUs as babies, scored higher on pain threshold tests using heat as the pain stimulus – demonstrating that early pain experiences might influence how you perceive pain later” he said.

About the American Pain Society

Based in Glenview, Ill., the American Pain Society (APS) is a multidisciplinary community that brings together a diverse group of scientists, clinicians and other professionals to increase the knowledge of pain and transform public policy and clinical practice to reduce pain-related suffering.

APS was founded in 1978 with 510 charter members. From the outset, the group was conceived as a multidisciplinary organization. APS has enjoyed solid growth since its early days and today has approximately 3,200 members. The Board of Directors includes physicians, nurses, psychologists, basic scientists, pharmacists, policy analysts and more.

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