

## Letter from the Founder and President

As a pediatric pain doctor, I have been treating children who suffer from chronic pain for over thirty years. Having seen children visit multiple doctors, undergo numerous tests, and take many medications with no end to their pain in sight, it became clear that something is needed to help more children than I could possibly see in my practice. For these reasons I started this 501(c)3 nonprofit, Creative Healing for Youth in Pain (chyp), in 2005 – to help youth who have chronic pain and their families. Once I retired from my full-time UCLA practice this past December I was able to devote myself full-time to the nonprofit. I have recruited a former patient of mine, Georgia Weston, (who has earned her Master of Social Work from USC, wrote two books, and started her own nonprofit to help teens who suffer from chronic pain) to be Executive Director of the nonprofit.

I am currently a Distinguished Research Professor of Pediatrics, Anesthesiology, Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and was Founder and Past-Director of the UCLA Pediatric Pain and Palliative Care Program. I have a long history dedicated to improving the treatment of pain in children and adolescents. I am co-author of the Institute of Medicine report on Transforming Pain in America and am a member of the National steering committee assigned to provide directions for pain research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I have received, among other awards, a Mayday Pain and Policy Fellowship and the 2005 Jeffrey Lawson Award for Advocacy in Children's Pain Relief from the American Pain Society (APS). My UCLA integrative pediatric pain program received a 2009 Clinical Centers of Excellence in Pain Management Award from APS and a 2012 award from the Southern California Cancer Pain Initiative. I am active in advocacy for pain care and research and was an invited member of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Special Advisory Committee on the State of Opioids in America. I am also an invited member of the FDA Committee on Analgesia, Anesthesia, and Addiction. I have over 350 research publications on childhood pain and complementary therapies, have written more than 80 chapters, and published two books of my own. The reason why I tell you all this is to show you that I *know* pain.

Acute pain is something that the entire population deals with – pain that is a symptom of an injury or illness – but chronic pain is something that occurs for millions of Americans. For example, acute pain occurs if a child were to break an ankle playing sports. This same child would get an x-ray that would identify the broken bone, the ankle would be put in a cast, and the child would be told to stay off the leg to allow the bone to heal. Chronic pain occurs after this – after the bone has healed but the pain continues. Most doctors do not understand why the child is still complaining of pain.

The cause of the pain has moved from the ankle to the neural circuits in the brain. New pain circuits have formed that keep the pain active and the origin is now called central pain. Research has shown that the most effective ways of changing these central pain circuits and reducing pain are not with medications, but with creative activities with the mind and body. Through chyp we are offering an online platform for teens with chronic pain and their caregivers to learn about our modern understanding of chronic pain and provide a variety of creative healing experiences. We also know that support from understanding peers helps with

the healing process. chyp provides online support through connecting teens who have chronic pain, and connection and support for their caregivers.

Chronic pain is now recognized as its own disease rather than a symptom. It is the experience of an over-active nervous system. Since it is a neurological condition that occurs primarily in the brain, but affects different parts of the body, the traditional medical model that most physicians use does not typically work for the child with chronic pain. Rather, modern science has shown that strengthening the mind/body connection plus social support (also known as the “biopsychosocial” model) are the tools needed to change chronic pain.

Just as I *know* pain, I *know* what does not work for pain. Most physicians are not taught how to treat chronic pain and tend to give medications such as opioids. Between 1994-2007 opioid prescriptions for pediatric patients have doubled. Opioids are not the best way to treat chronic pain in youth.

Research has shown that over 45 million Americans suffer from chronic pain and 70% of adolescents with chronic pain will go on to become adults with chronic pain. Adolescence is a key period to alter the pathway to suffering from chronic pain before adulthood. That is why I started chyp. I want youth with chronic pain and their families to have a safe place to go – where they can feel understood and empowered – regardless of financial limitations or where they live.

With your help, chyp can provide the tools necessary to change the experience of pain through evidence-based creative healing experiences that reduce an over-active nervous system. We have developed strong programs to help this vulnerable population, and now we need your support to make it happen. For now, I will leave you with this:

In my decades of working as a pediatric pain expert, the number one issue that children and teens with chronic pain face is feeling alone. Due to their pain most can no longer play sports, attend school, or participate in social functions. They become more and more isolated, which is a factor that leads to self-doubt. Doctors, friends, and families often do not even believe that the pain is real! When most of my patients come to me, they know that the pain is real, but feel that others believe that they are making it up or are “crazy.” These thoughts alone can cause more problems, such as anxiety or depression. Through chyp, I am spreading the life-saving message that chronic pain is real, it can be helped, and these teens are not alone.

Your donation can help give hope to a young person in pain and his or her family, and that is a beautiful gift.

Sincerely,



Dr. Lonnie Zeltzer

Founder & President  
Creative Healing for Youth in Pain (chyp)