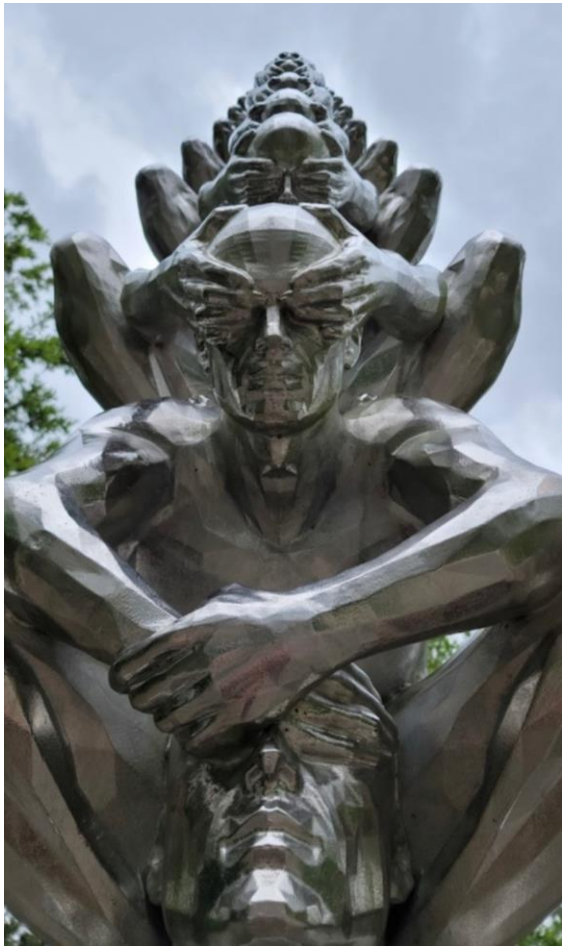
Metrics and Assessment of Chronic Pain in Children: Implications for Social Security Disability Determinations



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I have no relevant financial relationships or conflicts of interest to disclose related to the content of this presentation.

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Introduction

Current Assessment Tools for Children with Chronic Pain

Children experiencing chronic pain present unique assessment challenges compared to adults. Our current assessment toolkit includes:

Self-Report Measures

- **Faces Pain Scales**: Modified for developmental appropriateness
- **Pediatric Pain Questionnaire**: Captures intensity, location, and quality
- **Bath Adolescent Pain Questionnaire**: Multidimensional assessment of pain impact
- **Pain Catastrophizing Scale for Children**: Measures maladaptive cognitive responses

Developmental Impacts and Long-Term Considerations

Chronic pain in childhood has cascading developmental effects that disability determinations must consider:

Neurophysiological: Pain sensitivity, central sensitization

Physical: Altered movement patterns, decreased physical activity

Psychological: Increased risk of anxiety, depression, catastrophizing

Social: Peer relationship difficulties, social isolation

Educational: Missed school, academic underachievement

Vocational: Limited exploration of career interests, skills development

These developmental impacts can profoundly affect function throughout the lifespan, creating challenges for age-specific disability assessments.

A multidimensional approach is essential because children's expression of pain differs significantly across developmental stages, making standardized assessment challenging for SSA determinations.

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPRAOCH

Medical Specialists: Differential diagnosis, medical management

Physical/Occupational Therapists: Functional assessment, activity limitations

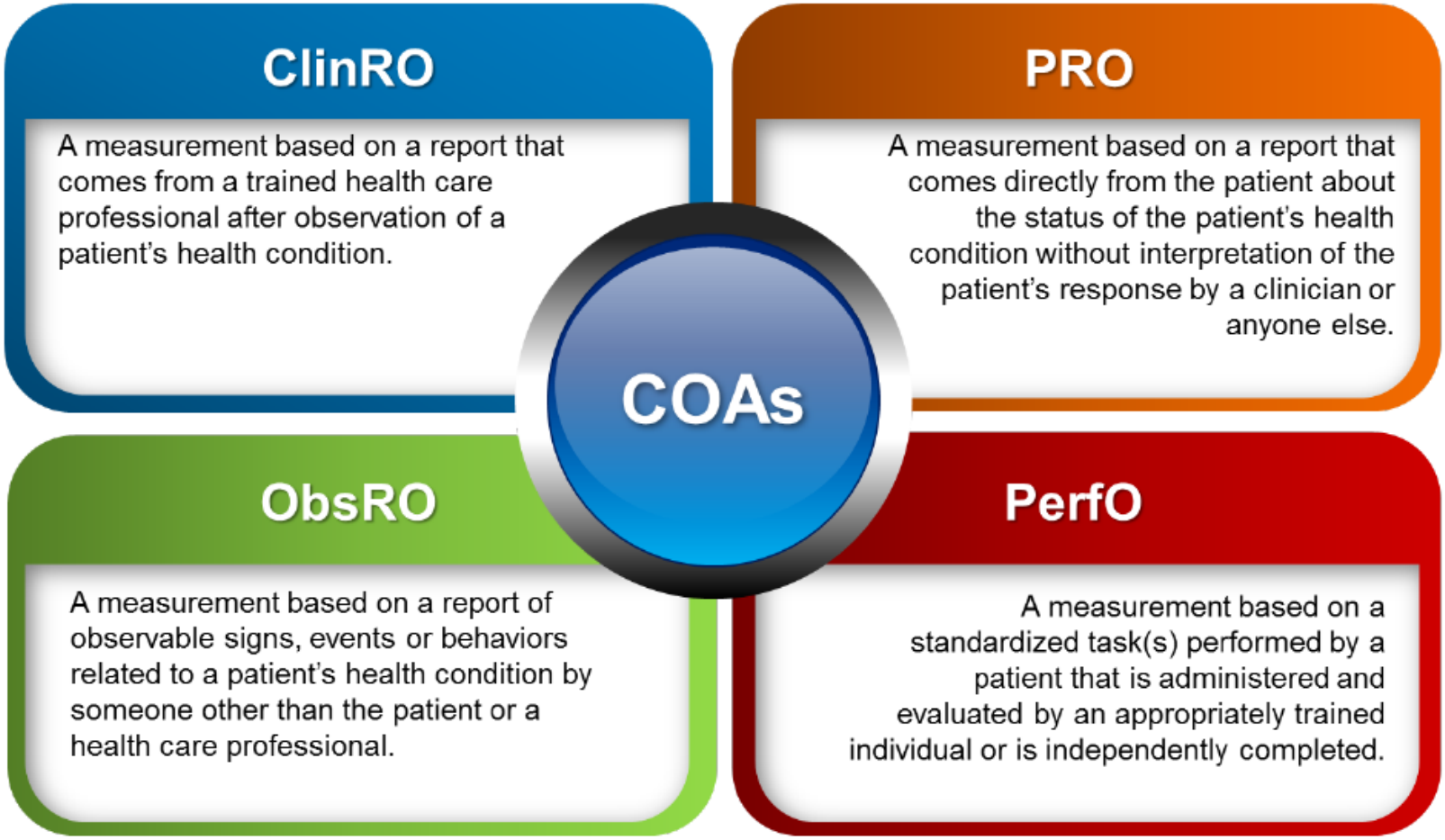
Psychologists: Behavioral impacts, coping mechanisms

School Personnel: Academic performance, attendance, participation

Social Workers: Environmental factors, resource access

Multidisciplinary Approach to Pediatric Pain Assessment

Clinical Outcome Assessment Types [FDA]



*There are certain types of COAs derived from mobile health technologies (e.g., activity monitors, sleep monitors) that do not fall into one of the other types of COAs.

ObsRO – PerfO - ClinRO Measures

Behavioral Observation Scales (For Pre-verbal or Non-verbal Children)

- **FLACC Scale (Face, Legs, Activity, Cry, Consolability)**: Observational tool for children 2 months to 7 years; validated for acute pain and adapted for chronic pain
- **Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Pain Scale (CHEOPS)**: Validated for postoperative pain in children 1-5 years
- **Non-Communicating Children's Pain Checklist-Revised (NCCPC-R)**: For children with cognitive impairment who cannot self-report

Functional Assessment Tools (Critical for Disability Evaluation)

- **Functional Disability Inventory (FDI)**: Measures activity limitations; considered gold standard for functional impact of pediatric chronic pain
- **Child Activity Limitations Interview (CALI)**: Personalized assessment of pain impact on specific activities
- **PROMIS Pediatric Pain Interference Scale**: Measures impact on physical, psychological, and social functioning
- **School Functioning Assessment**: Evaluates academic performance and attendance

Biopsychosocial Assessment Tools

- **Pain Catastrophizing Scale for Children (PCS-C)**: Measures rumination, magnification, and helplessness
- **Fear of Pain Questionnaire, Child version (FOPQ-C)**: Assesses pain-related fear and avoidance
- **Pediatric Pain Coping Inventory**: Measures strategies children use to cope with pain

Physiological/Objective Measures (Complementary)

- **Quantitative Sensory Testing (QST)**: Measures responses to standardized sensory stimuli
- **Conditioned Pain Modulation (CPM)**: Assesses endogenous pain inhibition
- **Activity monitoring**: Wearable accelerometers to measure physical activity patterns

PRO: Self-report Measures

1.Faces Pain Scales

- **Wong-Baker FACES Scale**: Six faces ranging from smiling ("no hurt") to crying ("hurts worst"); widely used for children 3+ years
- **Faces Pain Scale-Revised (FPS-R)**: A scale of six neutral to pained facial expressions; validated for children 4-18 years and preferred for research due to its non-emotional design

2.Numerical Rating Scales (NRS)

- **0-10 Numeric Scale**: Typically reliable for children 8+ years
- **Color Analog Scale**: Visual sliding scale with color gradation (white to dark red) for intensity; useful for children 5+ years

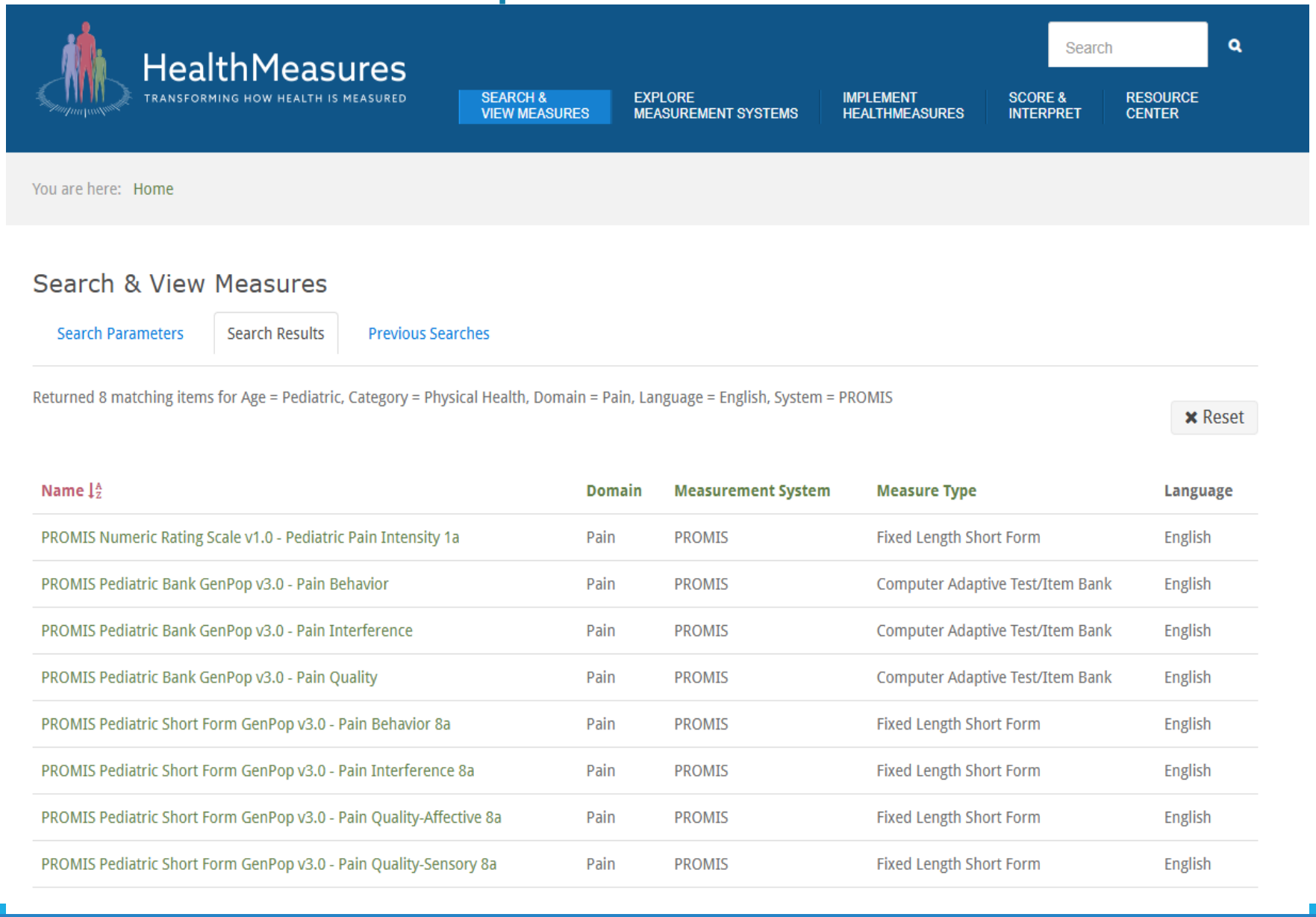
3.Pediatric Pain Questionnaires

- **Pediatric Pain Questionnaire (PPQ)**: Multidimensional assessment including visual analog scales, pain descriptors, and body outline diagrams
- **PROMIS Pediatric Pain Measures**: NIH-developed patient-reported outcomes including pain intensity, interference, and quality

4.Multidimensional Pain Inventories

- **Bath Adolescent Pain Questionnaire**: Comprehensive assessment of pain, physical functioning, social functioning, depression, anxiety, family impact, and development
- **Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory (PedsQL)**: Includes pain impact module

Pediatric Self-report



Name	Domain	Measurement System	Measure Type	Language
PROMIS Numeric Rating Scale v1.0 - Pediatric Pain Intensity 1a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English
PROMIS Pediatric Bank GenPop v3.0 - Pain Behavior	Pain	PROMIS	Computer Adaptive Test/Item Bank	English
PROMIS Pediatric Bank GenPop v3.0 - Pain Interference	Pain	PROMIS	Computer Adaptive Test/Item Bank	English
PROMIS Pediatric Bank GenPop v3.0 - Pain Quality	Pain	PROMIS	Computer Adaptive Test/Item Bank	English
PROMIS Pediatric Short Form GenPop v3.0 - Pain Behavior 8a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English
PROMIS Pediatric Short Form GenPop v3.0 - Pain Interference 8a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English
PROMIS Pediatric Short Form GenPop v3.0 - Pain Quality-Affective 8a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English
PROMIS Pediatric Short Form GenPop v3.0 - Pain Quality-Sensory 8a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English

Parent Proxy Report

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Name	Domain	Measurement System	Measure Type	Language
PROMIS Numeric Rating Scale v1.0 - Parent Proxy Pain Intensity 1a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English
PROMIS Parent Proxy Bank GenPop v3.0 - Pain Behavior	Pain	PROMIS	Computer Adaptive Test/Item Bank	English
PROMIS Parent Proxy Bank GenPop v3.0 - Pain Interference	Pain	PROMIS	Computer Adaptive Test/Item Bank	English
PROMIS Parent Proxy Short Form GenPop v3.0 - Pain Behavior 8a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English
PROMIS Parent Proxy Short Form GenPop v3.0 - Pain Interference 8a	Pain	PROMIS	Fixed Length Short Form	English

Gold-Standard Measures for Pain Assessment in Children

- **Developmental appropriateness**: Tools must be matched to child's developmental stage
- **Multi-informant approach**: Information from child, parents, and clinicians
- **Multidimensional assessment**: Pain intensity, location, quality, frequency, duration, and functional impact
- **Context-specific measures**: Different tools for different settings (clinical, research, home, school)
- **Longitudinal tracking**: Regular assessment over time rather than single-point measurements

For Social Security disability determinations, the combination of standardized self-report measures, functional assessment tools, and school/home functioning documentation provides the most comprehensive evidence base.

SSA Disability Evaluation for Children with Chronic Pain

Childhood SSI Disability Framework

- Requirement for "marked and severe functional limitations"
- Duration requirement of 12 months or longer
- Consideration of age-appropriate functioning

Relevant Listings in Children's SSA Disability Determination

- **101.00 Musculoskeletal Disorders**: Often insufficient for pain without structural findings
- **111.00 Neurological Disorders**: May apply to certain pain conditions
- **112.00 Mental Disorders**: Relevant when psychological comorbidities exist
- **114.00 Immune System Disorders**: Applicable for conditions like juvenile arthritis

Functional Equivalence Assessment

- **Six Domains of Functioning**: Acquiring/using information; attending/completing tasks; interacting with others; moving/manipulating objects; self-care; health/physical well-being
- The challenge of documenting "marked" limitations in multiple domains

Challenges in Current SSA Framework for Pediatric Chronic Pain

Evidence Requirements: Heavy reliance on medical documentation when functional limitations may be better documented in educational settings

Developmental Considerations: Insufficient accommodation for changing functional impacts across developmental stages

Episodic Nature: Difficulty capturing intermittent but severe functional limitations

Pain Without Pathology: Limited recognition of pain conditions without clear medical findings

Transition Issues: Problematic shift from childhood to adult disability criteria

Recommendations for Improvement

Enhanced Assessment Protocols	• Standardized multidimensional assessment batteries for pediatric chronic pain • Clearer guidance on functional assessment documentation for SSA claims
Cross-System Collaboration	• Formalized communication channels between healthcare, education, and SSA • Training for school personnel on functional documentation relevant to SSA
Transition Planning	• Structured protocols for adolescents transitioning to adult healthcare and disability systems • Longitudinal tracking of functional impacts across developmental stages
SSA Guidance Updates	• Expanded recognition of pediatric pain conditions in disability listings • More nuanced functional equivalence assessment for pain-related limitations

Children with chronic pain face unique assessment challenges that impact their access to appropriate disability determinations.

By improving our measurement tools, documentation systems, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, we can better serve this vulnerable population and ensure appropriate support through the Social Security disability system.

Conclusion