

Shriners Children's Develops Appraisal Tool for Pediatric Spinal Cord Injury Patients

September is Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month, and Shriners Children's Chicago is piloting a revolutionary appraisal tool to help children in their recovery.

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, September 16, 2025 / EINPresswire.com/ -- September is Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Awareness Month, and Shriners Children's Chicago is currently piloting a revolutionary, first-of-its-kind appraisal tool to help children in their recovery from SCIs.

The PedsADAPSS survey enables children and their caregivers to express their feelings about their injury, their perception of it, and its impact on their lives. From there, the answers can be used to identify mental health resources and inform next steps across all aspects of care. Shriners Children's Chicago Pediatric Psychologist and Researcher Kyle Deane, Ph.D., said the tool can be a predictor of how children will cope with their SCI, which in a majority of cases is a traumatic, life-changing injury.

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Kyle Deane, Ph.D.

“What we've really found is that how a child views their injury plays a significant role in their long-term care and recovery outlook,” Deane said. “For example, if we can identify that a child has a positive view of their condition and views their wheelchair as a tool rather than solely a negative part of their circumstances, we know they'll be

more likely to use it, which increases the likelihood of them being social and having better overall emotional health. On the other hand, if a child sees their wheelchair as a threat or a burden, this can lead to social isolation, depression, not getting a job and many more negative effects. If we can help kids reframe their mindset around their injury, their overall health can improve.”



Media-approved image of Shriners Children's Pediatric Psychologist and Researcher Kyle Deane, Ph.D., with patient Jeremy.

Deane said many secondary health conditions can be tied back to a person's appraisal of their SCI. Those who have a negative view surrounding different aspects of their injury can experience other conditions, like lack of sleep, sleep pain, psychological problems, and more.

"With these results, we can recommend psychologists and social workers to patients, and use the data to inform and improve patients' rehab and care," Deane said. "A key part of the PedsADAPSS is also learning how the patients' parents or caregivers are reacting to their SCIs. Anyone who works with children knows the impact their caregivers have on them. This tool will allow us to help any parents who are struggling, too. By measuring how families are coping, we can connect them with the right support at the right time."

The tool gives a clearer picture of emotional and psychological needs, not just medical ones. It allows care teams to track psychosocial outcomes, evaluate interventions, and ultimately improve long-term well-being.

While an ADAPSS tool is routinely used in adult SCIs, Deane said there is no evaluation tool of this kind in the pediatric space. The PedsADAPSS is currently in its research phase, and Shriners Children's locations who specialize in pediatric spinal cord injury rehabilitation and therapy, in Chicago, Northern California, and Philadelphia, are piloting the survey with 150 patients and their parents, aiming to make it an official tool for all SCI patients by early 2026.

About Shriners Children's

Shriners Children's improves the lives of children by providing pediatric specialty care, conducting innovative research, and offering outstanding education programs for medical professionals. Children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate are eligible for care, regardless of the families' ability to pay or insurance status, and receive all care and services in a compassionate, family-centered environment. For more information, please visit shrinerschildrens.org.

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