

# Keeping Pain in Check

## Research Project – summary of the results



People with intellectual disability and limited communication rely on the people around them (for example, disability support workers) to identify that they are experiencing pain and then respond accordingly. Often, disability support workers have not been taught about pain in people with intellectual disability and what to do if they think that a person they are supporting is experiencing pain.

The key aim of this research was to see if a pain checklist, the Non-Communicating Adult Pain Checklist (NCAPC\*), could help disability support workers identify pain. The NCAPC focusses on behavioural indicators of pain (for example, vocalisations, emotional reactions, facial expressions). Another aim was to evaluate the impact of an online training course about pain in people with intellectual disability.

### The Online Training:



#### 98 disability staff

(e.g., disability support workers, physiotherapists, speech pathologists) completed the online training



#### 70.4%

of these staff reported that the training helped improve their knowledge about and their confidence to identify pain in people with intellectual disability and limited communication

#### 95.9%

of these staff would recommend the training to colleagues



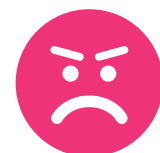
### The Checklist:

**48 disability support workers completed the NCAPC** after observing a person with intellectual disability and limited communication that they worked with. Overall, there were many differences in behaviours observed when the person with intellectual disability was thought to be in pain compared to when they were content.



#### 8.4%

of people moaned, whined, and whimpered fairly/ very often when they were content versus 56.3% when they were in pain



#### 27.1%

of people were cranky, irritable, and unhappy fairly/ very often when they were content versus 60.4% when they were in pain



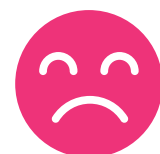
#### 27.1%

of people were difficult to distract, not able to be satisfied or pacified fairly/ very often when they were content versus 56.3% when they were in pain



#### 23%

of people had a change in their eyes including squinting, eyes open wide, and eyes furrowed fairly/ very often when they were content versus 60.5% when they were in pain



#### 16.7%

of people turned down their mouth fairly/ very often when they were content versus 52.1% when they were in pain

**There were some behaviours that did not seem to change as much regardless of whether the person was content or in pain:**



**20.9%**

of people protected, favoured, or guarded part of the body that hurt fairly/ very often when they were content versus 27.1% when in pain



**18.8%**

of people had a change in facial colour fairly/ very often when they were content versus 25.1% when in pain



**12.5%**

of people had respiratory irregularities such as holding their breath or gasping fairly/ very often when they were content versus 16.7% when in pain

## Overall

Overall, the scores on the Checklist were higher when the person was thought to be in pain than when they were content. Combined, these results suggest that the Checklist may help disability support workers identify pain in people with intellectual disability and limited communication.



**93.8%**

of disability support workers would recommend using the Checklist to others



**83.4%**

of disability support workers said they would be very likely or likely to use the Checklist again



**95.8%**

of disability support workers reported that the Checklist was very easy or easy to use

**For more information about this research email [research@scopeaust.org.au](mailto:research@scopeaust.org.au)**

\*Lotan, M., Moe-Nilssen, R., Ljunggren, A., & Strand, L. (2009) Reliability of the Non-Communicating Adult Pain Checklist (NCAPC), assessed by different groups of health workers. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 30, 735-745.