Improving pain management after pediatric tonsil surgery - an ongoing project

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Objective
To illustrate the improvement process, efforts, and the use of a quality register in pain and pain management after tonsil surgery in Sweden.

Process

• Registry data indicated unrelieved postoperative pain with a high proportion of health care contacts [1]. This resulted in the implementation of the Swedish National Guidelines (2013) and patient information published on the website tonsilloperation.se. The guidelines recommend multimodal pain treatment with paracetamol combined with COX-inhibitors, and, if necessary, oral clonidine rather than opioids as rescue analgesics [2].

• A national survey (2015) showed that Swedish ENT-professionals’ opinions of, and the ENT-department’s adherence to the guidelines were good [3].

• According to the national registry data (2017), the implementation has resulted in longer use of postoperative analgesics and decrease in the number of health care contacts due to pain. Simultaneously, registry data showed that operating methods and techniques, age, and indication for surgery affect the pain outcome [4].

• Continued work
Quantitative and qualitative data are collected by mixed method (2017-2018) to evaluate the pain situation and pain management after pediatric tonsil surgery from the children’s and caregivers’ perspectives. Preliminary results show that children who are prescribed treatment according to the guidelines report less postoperative pain. One barrier for children’s and caregivers’ adherence to the prescribed pain treatment is that the children are not given the prescribed daily dose due to the one or several doses being skipped.

Conclusion
Pain management after tonsil surgery has been, and still is, a challenge for ENT-professionals and constant improvements are necessary. To increase children’s and caregivers’ adherence to the treatment the verbal and written patient information regarding the importance of regular pain treatment needs to be improved.