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Children: Different – but the same species. The evidence base for paediatric palliative care

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Two equal and opposite errors can be made in relation to specialist palliative medicine in children. The first is that children are so similar to adults that a thorough understanding of paediatrics is unnecessary. The second is that children are so different that what we already know about palliative medicine in adults is of no value.

In reality, though the practice of palliative medicine in children is unquestionably a paediatric specialty, the evidence-base on which it is built still comes largely from adults. A good practical knowledge of this therapeutics base is an essential grounding in paediatric palliative medicine.

This workshop will consider how much truth there is in the fundamental assertion and article of faith among paediatricians that 'children are not small adults', looking in particular at the development of pharmacokinetics over the course of childhood and using opioids as an example.

Richard Hain is Senior Lecturer in Paediatric Palliative Medicine at Cardiff University School of Medicine. His clinical training was in adult palliative medicine, paediatrics and paediatric oncology. His academic background was in pharmacology, particularly of opioids in children. His current research interests include opioids in children and epidemiology of paediatric palliative care. He has written a number of research and review articles, is an editor of the Oxford Textbook of Palliative Care in Children and Co-author of other chapters and textbooks including the Oxford Handbook of Palliative Medicine in Children.