



UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
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Spotlight on: Charles Jonassaint, PhD



Center Core Faculty Member, Charles Jonassaint, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Medicine, Social Work, and Clinical and Translational Science at the University of Pittsburgh. A practicing clinical health psychologist, he aims to reduce health care disparities using multimedia technology to deliver evidence-based interventions to underserved populations.

See a preview of the Center's interview with Dr. Jonassaint below, and visit [our website](#) to read the full interview!

Julia: Your work with patients with sickle cell has incorporated quite a bit of technology. Can you tell us about the role of digital health in your research?

Charles: Patients with sickle cell disease suffer from chronic pain. For a while, we were giving them paper and pencil to take home and keep track of the level and location of their pain and the medications they were taking. Patients would bring back the diaries totally blank and fill them out quickly in the waiting room. This was a common phenomenon, and most studies using paper and pencil diaries found that the majority of patients weren't filling them out regularly. So in 2009, we developed the SMART app to track pain in patients with sickle cell in addition to their interventions and medications. It was a new way to monitor and manage pain. That initial work was preliminary, but fortunately, Nirmish Shah and my father actually continued with it after I left Duke. That opened the doors to using mobile technology in my work. I went on to create a tool called Painimation. It's a simplistic idea that uses animations to measure pain. Pain is the number one reason people enter into the medical setting. Why do we still use a 0-10 scale to measure it? We have the most basic assessment, we aren't even that great at it, but we continue to use it. Incorporating pictures and animations could completely transform our understanding of our patients' pain.



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