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RESEARCH

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THE NURSE'S PERCEPTION OF PLAYING AND THE IMPACT OF THESE PRACTICES IN PEDIATRIC ASSISTANCE

A percepção do enfermeiro sobre o brincar e o impacto dessa prática na assistência pediátrica

La percepción del enfermero sobre el brincar y el impacto de esta práctica en la asistencia pediátrica

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To know the nurses' perception about playing and the impact of this practice on pediatric care.

Method: This is an exploratory descriptive exploratory qualitative approach. The data collection was done after approval of the Research Ethics Committee, through a semistructured interview, during the period from May to August 2017. **Results:** Ten nurses participated in the study. From the interviews with the professionals it was possible to apprehend two categories: Nurses' perception about playing in the process of child recovery and difficulties encountered by nursing in performing play activities. **Conclusion:** Given the breadth of care for the child, professionals often say that they do not have enough time to develop any playful activity. They stressed, therefore, the importance of having an adequate number of professionals against the demand of work, considering the complexity of the child.

Descriptors: Child hospitalized, Pediatric nursing, Play and playthings.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Conhecer a percepção do enfermeiro sobre o brincar e o impacto dessa prática na assistência pediátrica. **Método:** Trata-se de uma pesquisa descritiva, exploratória e com abordagem qualitativa. A coleta de dados foi realizada após aprovação do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, por meio de uma entrevista semiestruturada, durante o período de maio a agosto de 2017. **Resultados:** Participaram do estudo 10 enfermeiros. A partir das entrevistas com os profissionais foi possível a apreensão de duas categorias: A percepção do enfermeiro sobre o brincar no processo de recuperação infantil e as dificuldades encontradas pela enfermagem na realização de atividades lúdicas. **Conclusão:** Diante da amplitude que reveste o cuidado à criança, os profissionais afirmam frequentemente, não possuem tempo

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suficiente para desenvolver qualquer atividade lúdica. Ressaltaram, assim, a importância de haver um número adequado de profissionais frente a demanda de trabalho, considerando a complexidade da criança.

Descritores: Criança hospitalizada, Enfermagem pediátrica, Jogos e brinquedos.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Conocer la percepción del enfermero sobre el juego y el impacto de esta práctica en la asistencia pediátrica. **Método:** Se trata de una investigación descriptiva exploratoria y con abordaje cualitativo. La recolección de datos fue realizada después de la aprobación del Comité de Ética em Investigación, a través de una entrevista semiestructurada, durante el período de mayo a agosto de 2017. **Resultados:** Participaron del estudio 10 enfermeros. A partir de las entrevistas con los profesionales fue posible la aprehensión de dos categorías: La percepción del enfermero sobre el jugar en el proceso de recuperación infantil y dificultades encontradas por la enfermería en la realización de actividades lúdicas.

Conclusión: Ante la amplitud que reviste el cuidado al niño, los profesionales afirman, frecuentemente, no poseen tiempo suficiente para desarrollar cualquier actividad lúdica. Resaltaron, así, la importancia de haber un número adecuado de profesionales frente a la demanda de trabajo, considerando la complejidad del niño.

Descriptor: Niño hospitalizado, Enfermería pediátrica, Juego e implementos de juego.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of playing in the hospital environment represents both possible and appropriate means of communication for the pediatric nursing team. Nonetheless, it is necessary for them to know the benefits of this method and to continue building intuitive knowledge, based on daily life, to another conceptual level, in which the nursing care systematization, the incorporation of study results and, even reflections on the child's uniqueness and the context in which childcare takes place are considered.¹

The hospitalization process means for the child a different moment from all the ones already experienced. She finds herself in an impersonal universe, full of taboos and representations, different from her daily environment, far from her relatives and friends, and is surrounded by strange people who always touch her and perform procedures that usually cause her discomfort.² For another author,³ this experience could be less traumatic if there was more interaction between the nursing team and the insertion of playful activities during hospitalization.

Understanding and meeting the needs of children through playing contributes to health professionals transforming the hospital scenario into a powerful space for the humanization of care in pediatrics. This strategy can be carried out in the different stages of care, requiring, therefore, a planned and consistent choice with the children's profile and needs.⁴

When defining working with children, in other words, taking care of their health in a comprehensive approach, it is decided to provide assistance to a group of differentiated people, and for this assistance to be provided in an appropriate manner, it is necessary to use recreational resources, as it is a method that brings benefits when used while caring for the hospitalized child.¹

Therefore, such activity allows the health team to see the client in a comprehensive approach. This resource makes it possible to discern the type of care that the patient needs, at that moment, so that they can help him, in order to preserve his dignity and integrity. Considering the abovementioned, the complexity of caring is established, since the action implies not only in curing the disease, but also in the restoration and preservation of the client's physical and emotional integrity, thus reducing the negative impacts to the patients, which are exposed during hospitalization.⁵

Hence, this study meant to know the nurses' viewpoint on playing and its impact towards pediatric care, identifying the benefits and the main difficulties in carrying out such activity.

METHODS

It is a descriptive-exploratory research with a qualitative approach, which provides better familiarity with the problem, making it more explicit and enabling the construction of hypothesis and qualitative approach, as it is based on the premise that knowledge about people is only possible from the description of human experience as it is lived and as defined by its own actors.^{6,7}

The research scenario was a public institution, located in *Teresina* city, *Piauí* State, which provides childcare to children, being a referral center for the local population and other surrounding municipalities.

The research received approval from the Ethics and Research Committee of the *Universidade Estadual do Piauí (UESPI/FACIME)* with the following the Legal Opinion No. 2.043.540, and respected all aspects addressed by the Resolution No. 466/12 from the National Health Council. All participants signed the Informed Consent Form in two copies, one given to the participant and the other to the researcher.

The participants were 10 registered nurses selected by the following inclusion criteria: nurses of both genders, who work in the five nursing units distributed in the different sectors of the institution during dayshifts, and who signed the Informed Consent Form. Those working in the operating room and intensive care unit sector and those on vacation, maternity leave and medical certificate were excluded. It is worth mentioning that only two nurses refused to participate.

Data collection took place through semi-structured interviews containing 04 open questions, which were undertaken over the period from May to August 2017. The participants had time to organize their thinking and then answered the following questions: What is their perception on playing in regard to the child recovery process? What are the difficulties faced by nursing professionals in carrying out recreational activities in this institution? In the sector in which you operate, is there any type of recreational activity? Which are? In your view, what are the benefits of carrying out playing activities in regard to children's rehabilitation and recovery?

For a complete and accurate record of the subjects' speeches, the interviews were recorded with the support of an mp3 device. The anonymity of the participants was maintained at all times and, for that, names of cartoon characters were

adopted to identify them. For the operationalization of the analysis process, after the transcription of the interviews, the reading of the material began to explore the content and interpret the results obtained, which were arranged in two categories, among them; The nurses' viewpoint on playing concerning the child recovery process; and, The difficulties faced by nursing professionals in carrying out recreational activities.

RESULTS

This study counted with the participation of 10 registered nurses, 1 (one) male and 9 (nine) females. All worked at the nursing units of the institution where the research was performed during the data collection period. Based on the interviews with the nursing professionals, it was possible to express two categories: The nurses' viewpoint on playing concerning the child recovery process; and, The difficulties faced by nursing professionals in carrying out recreational activities.

The nurses' viewpoint on playing concerning the child recovery process

During the analysis of the nurses' speeches who were involved in the study, it was possible to perceive that playfulness is an instrument that provides benefits for both the child and the professional. Regarding the benefits for the child, it was possible to highlight that playfulness favors a less traumatic care process, in addition to improving response to treatment. This can be seen in the following statements:

Playing with the child in the process of her recovery is very important, the child feels better, feels that she is not discriminated against because of that pathology, and even her health improves, recovery is much more viable with play. (Pêpa)

The process of playing mainly for the child is something very important because it helps a lot in their cognitive progress, right, so the child is already hospitalized, she is undergoing a fragile moment of life, away from some relatives, away from her normal environment at home, of her family, so this process of playing helps a lot so that she can get a little out of this idea of hospitalization and manage to make a more peaceful recovery. (Minie)

In the nurses' viewpoint, when including recreational activities in the caring routine, there is a change of mood generated by the smile on the face, the recurring satisfaction, bringing positive responses to the treatment, as well as reducing the negative feelings generated by the clinical status, an aspect pointed out in the words of princess Sophia:

The benefit is mutual, for us at the time of care provision and for them, because we observe every child who has a better interaction with other people who provide care to them, we observe that the recovery is much better,

it is gratifying to see the smile as a consequence, a faster recovery. (Princess Sophia)

It is through playing that the child starts to see the professional in another way, ceasing to be someone unknown, who invades her privacy, becoming someone who cares while playing, who helps to face the process of health and illness.

The child starts to interact more with both the team and the parents, and this improves a lot the progress, improvement and even the treatment of the disease. (Elsa)

With regard to the benefits for the professionals, it was evidenced that when caring, playing, they feel gratified and happy, since the children recognize a differentiated care, which softens the hospital environment, which is sometimes a place of inner conflicts, due to experiencing daily failure and near death, as we can see in the following speech:

[...] this issue of interacting with the child, playing, creates trust and then facilitates performing procedures, punctures, dressings, things that impact, they already fear, they are already afraid and then you provide so much confidence. I believe that the greatest benefit is the confidence you give to children, then it allows us to do the procedures. (Wonder Woman)

The difficulties faced by nursing professionals in carrying out recreational activities

Nursing professionals recognized that numerous barriers hinder and even prevent the use of this tool in daily life, despite recognizing the benefits that recreational activities bring not only to the child, but also to her family and even to the professional as well. The main problem pointed out that hinders the use of playfulness is the lack of time:

The difficulty is the issue of the nursing service itself, which does not allow us to have time to carry out this type of activity and I believe that it is the work overload. (Wonder Woman)

In addition to these aspects, there is also a lack of adequate structure to carry out these activities, resulting in improvised settings:

The main difficulty that we find here in the institution is the lack of structure, there is no toy library for children, so, there is not an adequate leisure space for them and we try to improvise in the best possible way, but end up not replacing an adequate space for these recreational activities. (Frozen)

Another difficulty encountered was the reduced number of professionals on the nursing team, which reduced the possibility of interaction and use of recreational activities, then favoring fragmented care provision.

The difficulties are more focused on the work itself, because we have to perform all the nursing work, so, willing to be playing would not be easy, which would be good to face this difficulty, we should have a moment for this, an appropriate place, to make them interact with us, not with that perception that we only treat the disease, but that we are also there to interact with them and help to bring other benefits. (Snow White)

Another obstacle also observed that weakens the strategy of performing recreational activities, was the deficit in training and, consequently, the lack of knowledge of nursing professionals on the topic.

I think that the difficulties are not having trained professionals, right, for such recreational activities, because there are several types. This is one of the difficulties, lack of training, training of professionals to work on this issue, even concerning activities and the time issue at the workplace. (Monica)

Hence, it is clear that the difficulties mentioned above are part of the reality that interferes to a more humanized nursing care, as it creates a barrier distancing nursing professionals to experiencing playful care, taking away their creativity, bringing tensions, fears, that negatively impact on the nursing care planning in terms of adding something new, something playful in the daily scenario.

DISCUSSION

The use of playfulness in the hospital is an indispensable tool while providing care to hospitalized children, since it brings benefits to both parties involved in the health-disease process: child and professional, and this was also evidenced in a survey,⁸ which found that playfulness helps the child in the reduction of tensions, anxiety and frustration and promotes satisfaction, fun and spontaneity and for the professionals who deal with this public, this tool is considered an intervention instrument and a form of communication, making it possible to detect the uniqueness of each child.

This research showed that hospitalization is a difficult experience to be experienced by the child, due to the need to leave the family, friends, school and also because it involves an unknown and painful routine, another study⁹ also underlined this problem stating that the child faces difficulties with painful and unpleasant experiences, therefore, the support of those who assist the child is essential for adaptation in the hospital environment and treatments to which they are submitted, because the differentiated action with the child contributes to the daily hospitalization.

Given the above-mentioned, it appears that the data observed in this research concerning the difficulties faced by nursing professionals using recreational activities corroborate with the results obtained in other studies,¹⁰⁻² where the main difficulties consist of the lack of time and employees to performing the activity, making the daily demands favor

the prioritization of technical care based on procedures. Moreover, another barrier found was the lack of preparation of the team, as many believe that nursing professionals are better prepared to provide technical care aiming the procedure rather the context.¹⁰

The results obtained revealed the importance of the toy library in a hospital environment, although it has been reported that this sector does not exist. The toy library represents the place that ensures the child the right to play and offers a favorable place for their recovery, stimulating socialization processes and contributing to the educational education of the child in a new concept of hospital care in pediatrics.¹³

When there is a space dedicated to playing within a pediatric hospitalization sector, this shows the institution's concern for the children's global well-being, providing greater confidence for them and their family. This space helps to preserve the child's emotional health, to face situations unknown to the child, to improve the child's adaptation to the hospital environment, to ease trauma and to make the environment less hostile.¹⁴

Considering the aforementioned, it became evident that when providing care to children, it is necessary that the nursing team adopts a holistic approach and focused on human contact, viewing the child as a being who needs care not only to his pathological condition, but also to their psychological and social state, and even if the hospital routine requires activities to be carried out at a certain time, it is necessary to note that the use of recreational activities can be a facilitator for nursing practice, as it allows the establishment of bonds with the child, so that care is provided faster and efficiently.¹⁴

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bearing in mind the aforesaid concerning childcare, professionals often affirm that they do not have enough time to carry out any recreational activity, often generating "robotic" caring. Thus, they underlined the importance of having an adequate number of professionals against the work demand, also considering the complexity of children.

Hence, it is concluded that the literature corroborates with the speeches of the professionals about the importance of playfulness for children. This study also highlights the importance of understanding playing as an indispensable aspect in childcare, being fundamental to their mental, emotional and social well-being.

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