

Nursing intervention in the management of emotions in children with acute illness and their families in a hospital context: a scoping review

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Abstract

Introduction

The experience of an acute illness situation, the visits to the emergency department, as well as potential hospitalizations are marked by a whirlwind of feelings and emotions, often of a negative tone, that affect children and their families. The unknown environment, the fear of pain and/or bodily harm, the loss of control and separation anxiety, are factors to insecurity and stress, both for the child and for the involved family¹. The child may experience feelings of anger, fear, anxiety and even animosity towards the procedures involved in care, which he/she manifests it through crying or aggression. Consequently, behavioral/developmental regressions, sleep disorders, night terrors, irritability and even decreased self-esteem can be observed^{2,3}. The parents' experience of an acute illness situation can also generate suffering, as they are immersed in feelings of anguish, guilt and stress that can even negatively affect the child's illness process^{4,5}. Therefore, it is up to the nurse to respond to the various needs of the dyad, whether emotional, cognitive, or behavioral, by implementing interventions and coping strategies that allow them to deal with the situation in a positive way.

Objective

Identify the emotional experience of the child and family in a situation of acute illness and systematize nursing interventions in the management of the emotional experience of the dyad.

Method

This scoping review follows JBI guidelines. After selecting the search terms according to DeCs/MeSH, a search was carried out in the CINHALL Complete, MEDLINE Complete, Academic Search Complete and Scopus databases, 19 publications were obtained for review, within the time limit between 1990 and 2021. This is a preliminary search, which will be continued in other equally relevant databases. Inclusion criteria were: Portuguese, English or Spanish, and according to P (nurses) C (emotional management) C (hospital context). Publications whose population was nursing students, the Neonatology context or the condition of chronicity and special needs were excluded.

Results

The 19 publications came from scientific journals. The studies were mostly of a qualitative nature and the data collection instruments are semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Of the situations of acute illness, the following stood out: respiratory, infectious, and surgical. About 36.84% of the studies address the emotional experience of the child (preschool and school children) in a hospital context; 47.37% report the experience of the mother/father/family; 15.79% refer to the nurse's experience, regarding the emotional experience of the child and family in a situation of acute illness. The nursing intervention strategies include support groups, shared health education, involvement in care, art therapy, drawing, workshops, and close communication, as well as an affective and welcoming relational environment. The experience of acute illness or hospitalization of the child induce an intense emotional experience, demanding the nurse's intervention

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regarding the emotional dimension of the child and the family, and the evidence of the articles under review supports the effectiveness of such strategies. These interventions highlight the emotional labour in pediatric nursing.

Conclusion

The nurses' intervention facilitates the child's and family's emotional management, to minimize the negative emotional impact of the experiencing acute illness and/or hospitalization. These interventions, when systematized, enhance the therapeutic intentionality in nursing, as well as the continuity of its investigation.

Keywords

Pediatric Nursing; Emotions; Child; Family; Acute Illness; Hospitalization.

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