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Children's experiences of acute hospitalisation to a paediatric emergency and assessment unit

Claus Sixtus Jensen
Aarhus University Hospital, Denmark

Abstract

Aim: To investigate children's experiences of acute hospitalisation to a paediatric emergency and assessment unit.

Background: Research on the child's perspective of hospitalisation is scarce. Changes in care delivery patterns in the previous decade have led to shorter length of hospital stay. Thus, short stay units where children can be assessed and admitted if necessary have been established. Potentially this can affect children negatively as hospital staffs have to establish relationships with the children very fast due to time constraints.

Method: Data were collected from September to November 2009. Interviews of eight children were conducted. A drawing made by the child prior to the interview was used as a focus for the interview. Data from the transcribed interviews informed the qualitative content analysis where themes were identified.

Findings: Three main themes were identified:

1. The children's understanding of disease, treatment and procedures
2. The children's experiences of health care personnel and the paediatric emergency and as-assessment unit
3. The children's experiences of everyday life at the hospital.

All main themes had more sub-categories.

Conclusion: The children in this study focused on the positive experiences of acute hospitalisation and enjoyed the attention they received. The children did not distinguish between staff members but saw staff as a homogenous group. Health care professionals need to be aware of the use of professional terminology as children's understanding may be faulty. These factors have ramifications for all health professionals in the area of paediatrics.

Biography

Claus Sixtus Jensen has completed Master of Health Science, Nursing in 2009 from Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia and is a Ph.D. student at Aarhus University in Denmark. He has been employed at the Paediatric Emergency and Assessment Unit at Department of Paediatrics at Aarhus University Hospital, Skejby in Denmark since 2001. His main interest is within acute paediatric care and has developed the first paediatric triage tool in Denmark and is focused in Paediatric Early Warning System in his Ph.D. study.

claus.sixtus@skejby.rm.dk