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The effect of storytelling on anxiety of 7-10 years old children hospitalization

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Background and purpose: Disease and hospitalization may be the first crisis that a child faces with. The children are much more fragile about the crises produced by hospitalization. Because the children have less adaptive mechanisms, they are more apt to the crisis produced by disease and hospitalization. The reactions of children towards hospitalization including anxiety, depression, angeriness and the delay in growth that may continue after discharge. In pediatric ward, various and numerous actions were performed in supporting the hospitalized children in order to reduce their anxiety in hospital. Those programs and interventions that reduce the children’s tension during hospitalization are valuable. Because of high percentage of hospitalized children and the effects produced by hospitalization and numerous mal effects of drug-based methods, there are much more attention to the non-drug-based methods. The hospitalization is always stressful among children, therefore the storytelling can be used as a non-drug-based method and tool that is favored by children who enjoyed listening to it.

Methods: This research is an experimental study as a type of clinical trail that was executed to study the effect of storytelling on the anxiety of 7-10 hospitalized children in which 64 hospitalized children who had the necessary characteristics to participate in the research were put in two groups of control and intervention in a random sampling. The collection of data was performed through designed demographic questionnaire and the revised scale of the obvious anxiety of children (RCMAS). The examination of anxiety was performed during the 8-18 hours of the first day of hospitalization and thirty minutes after the examination of the anxiety, the intervention was made. The intervention (storytelling) lasted for five days (for five days, every day one session) in 20-35 minutes. The stories were about the children’s anxiety by an expert in children’s literature. The storytelling was performed personally in an open room with the presence of mother and child. A day after storytelling’s intervention, the examination of anxiety (the sixth day) was performed. The control group received the routine actions of the ward. Like the intervention group, the examination of anxiety in control group was performed in the first and sixth days.

Findings: The anxiety’s score does not show any differentiation (p= 0.155) between two groups, before intervention. After executing the storytelling, the intervention group, had a meaningful reduction in anxiety number (p= 0.000). The findings show that storytelling can reduce the anxiety of children.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that storytelling can reduce the anxiety of hospitalized children, therefore it can be used as a tool that is favored by children and as an enjoyable non-drug-based, easy, unexpensive and accessible caring approach in children nursing.

Key words: Anxiety, Storytelling, Children