

PLAY CENTER

HAPPY HOURS

Cancer has a devastating effect on children's family and social environment. Probably, no other life experience can damage a family nucleus so seriously



Problem:

This chronic disease is a health problem that affects negatively a child's daily activities, especially when the child is hospitalized due to his/her serious condition. A child undergoing cancer will not only require specialized medical care, but also an emotional well-being that may contribute to a fast recovery, to the extent possible.

The procedures that patients undergo, the undesirable effects of chemotherapy and its life expectancy lead to stress in children, which manifests in anxiety, fear, behavioral changes, irritability, and withdrawal behaviors, among others.



Psychological and social impact

In addition, children bear a psychological and social impact caused after having been taken out abruptly from their family nucleus and exposed to a completely unknown environment with lots of restrictions and little contact with their siblings, friends, school mates and other family members.



Play Center:

In the play center, games are used as a communication and expression means between the therapist and the patient in order to help the child to understand his/her behavior in a better way and to solve adaptation problems. In addition to the fact that playing is fundamental for children, it is also a means to explore their environment, which in turn helps children to understand their world better.

The purpose of the play center is that children and teenagers may develop their physical, perceptive and sensory skills. Through games, children can practice their social skills and interact; their emotional skills and transmit feelings and emotions; and their cognitive skills, and learn through social games.



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PROJECT in charge of:

Manos Unidas por Coatzacoalcos A.C

Goals:

To preserve the health and satisfy special education needs of oncological patients

To decrease the bad impact that medical staff could cause to the children and their family

Develop a positive attitude

Use positive reinforcement techniques for enhancing patient motivation

To develop personal relations

To improve their mood and reinforce their immune system

To eliminate acquired negative social skills



That children and teenagers fully enjoy themselves while being treated, are able to relate to other patients and develop their skills through games and workshops.

To work with children in developing their physical integrity and emotional development.

Very interesting and relevant achievements result from these therapies, not only because of the interaction between the children and the hospital environment, but also because of the resulting improvements in patients' mood and immune system.

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Scope:

Recreational learning activities will be scheduled permanently to improve the life quality of each patient at the Pediatric Oncology Section of the Regional Hospital Dr. Valentín Gómez Farías and turn their stay into an entertaining experience in a place where laughter and good mood are always present as another way of treatment. Our goal is to raise the spirit of the children with cancer that spend many hours and days inside the hospital. This project is about changing hospital environment. All of their patients and their parents may participate in these activities.



The activities will take place at the Play Center, on the same floor where the Oncology Pediatrics section of the hospital is located. Entertainment workshops offer experiences that satisfy some of the specific needs of the hospitalized children and teenagers. When patients get involved in games or in any activity, they enjoy themselves and their self-esteem improves. This contributes with giving patients more resources to go through the inconveniences of the disease. The play center benefits their comprehensive development and improves their life quality. The activities proposed for the workshop may vary.

Among the activities there are art workshops and manual workshops (painting, molding, etc., as well as graphic design, internet, software courses (for adults), among others). Patients will enjoy a great variety of games such as: card games, books, comics, tales, magazines, board games, toys for children, electronic games for teenagers, as well as movies suitable for patients' age.



Positive attitude

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Opportunity:

In order to mitigate the tension faced by children who are hospitalized, we have considered some patterns that may help them. Children need opportunities to express their feelings and achieve a better understanding of their disease. One of the main characteristics of game therapy is the importance given to the development of trust.



Games allow patients to become active agents in their own medical care. These activities will promote a sense of normality in children (Chan, 1980), and strengthen and keep their basic identity schemes.

While playing, children will learn to master their environment, to face daily tensions and set relationships with other children. Therefore, the development of game programs in hospitals has great benefits. They contribute to providing a better health care, and hospitalization-related anxiety is reduced or at least not increased.

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Methodology:

Our methodology consists of setting specific therapies that will be used in patients within a different age range. These therapies will be followed-up at least during 6 months, during which several cognitive and emotional aspects, as well as lab test (hematic biometry) will be assessed. When the period result assessment of the study has elapsed, the study therapies with the most positive impact on patients will be determined.



Therapies will be linked to creativity and psychological support workshops. Creative works will be exposed in a gallery mounted for that specific purpose.

Parents and companions can also participate in workshops designed especially for them.

 Imagination

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Facilities:

The play center is designed with:

A reception area for parents

A common area for children to play and attend learning activities

An area for teenagers with activities proper for their age (playing, internet, graphic design courses, software, books and magazines)

Psychologist's office

Research office

TV closed circuit

Internet



Entertaining and learning games for any age

Magazines for children, teenagers and parents

Books on different interesting topics

Videogames

TV screens

DVD Players

Movies

Canvas and paintwork

Molding material



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Expected results:

The activities that are designed and put into practice are entertaining-learning activities focused on improving patients' personal, emotional and social conditions.

As patients' psychological health improves, physical recovery improves faster and children become cooperators; in addition, the game programs can help families as parents have more support when they know that their children's emotional needs are being met.



This experience of Hospital Pedagogy is useful to show how help conditions of these patients improves their concept of disease; it also shows that patients' expressive needs are satisfied since dialog, art and games bring benefits to patients' health.

The lab tests conducted (Hematic Biometry) to patients that have taken part in these researches have shown that there is a great recovery of their hematocrit and platelets level. Hence, patients are released in good and stable general conditions.