

“L’OSPEDALE LO CONOSCO ANCH’IO”: educational-didactic journey aimed at kindergarten children to counter with the fears of the hospital as a place of suffering



Vignola V.*, Bacchi M. T.**, Capretti, N.°, Izzi G.°°

* Psychologist-Psychoterapist – Department of Paediatrics and Onco-Hematology University Hospital of Parma, Italy; ** Primary School teacher “G. Ferrari” of Parma – Hospital section; ° President Voluntary Association “Noi per Loro” ONLUS of Parma, Italy; °° Director Department of Paediatrics and Onco-Hematology – Department Maternal Infantile, University Hospital of Parma, Italy

INTRO AND ABJECTIVES

The daily experience enhances the concept that children find hospitalization as extremely difficult and often frightening, even if they have no direct knowledge of it, this is mainly due to the impressions they receive from the family and the social context in which they live. Over the years we have radically changed the surroundings of the department with innovative care models: global support, the **Hospital School**, “**Giocamico**” project, “**Hospital without Pain**” project, which have made hospitalization a more acceptable and friendlier experience. With a new strategy to fight against the persistent state of fear, we wanted to act on learning process of children, at a very early stage, when they are still in kindergartens, and haven’t experienced illness and fear yet, in order to make them understand the reality of the hospital.

The project aimed at highlighting:

- The respect towards the child as a whole being - “**Not all, of the sick child, is sick**” - with the constant presence of parents, school, and the opportunity of playing;
- the presence of trained professionals for the paediatric age;
- the use of sedo-analgesia for painful procedures, the non-pharmacological pain control, child-oriented instruments.

METHOD

The project, funded by the Voluntary Association “Noi per Loro” ONLUS of Parma with the support of Cariparma Foundation, was created by the department in collaboration with the “Hospital School” and the kindergarten children of Parma and its province.

“**Tilly, una farfalla speciale**” was a story used by teachers to encourage discussion and debate among children who made drawings and wrote their thoughts; the whole material was displayed on the course of a traveling exhibition entitled “**I bambini raccontano...**”.

The delivery of a brochure containing useful information for a prospective admission, allowed the children and their families to cope with the awareness of a possible future hospitalization and helped to promote the image of the Hospital as a serene and care healing place.

RESULTS

The project was carried on in two phases (2004-2005 and 2008-2009) and involved overall approximately 3400 children between 4 and 5 years old enrolled to kindergarten children of Parma (about 2500 children) and province (about 900 children).

Large sections of the community were involved and sensitized by meetings with health-care operators, guided tours of the Hospital, traveling exhibitions with children’s drawings and written thoughts and the creation and distribution of a CD-ROM “**Giociamo con Tilly**”, a playful journey through which children discover hospital step by step.

CONCLUSIONS

The innovative aspect of the project is the prevention of psychological distress related to the widespread image of the Hospital as a scary and painful place.

Children, their teachers and parents could experiment this concept away from the Hospital, while they were in a psycho-physical state of well-being that allowed them a serene reflection on the topics of “Illness” and “Hospital”.

The same educational learning path has been undertaken by teachers and families.

Thanks to the awareness arisen, a positive behavioral feedback has been observed in children who took part into the project, and went through hospitalization in the following years.



A moment of meeting and learning with health-care operators



Children are experiencing...



The traveling exhibition “I bambini raccontano...”



*The CD-ROM
 “Giociamo con Tilly”*