Quality of Life for Children with Cancer

A series of modules on pediatric palliative care

Module 3

Quality of life for children with cancer who are hospitalized
To improve their quality of life in the hospital, we must understand their needs beyond the stabilization of vital signs and symptom relief.

It is important to consider that a child diagnosed with cancer may spend days or weeks in the hospital.

NEEDS OF THE HOSPITALIZED CHILD

The needs of a sick child vary according to age and the stage of illness:

**Physical:** Relieve symptoms, stimulate and enhance the growth and development of the child, and plan ahead for care.

**Psychological:** Have honest communication appropriate to the child’s developmental stage, and provide ongoing emotional support to help her manage feelings, continue daily tasks, and have incentives, goals, and future projects.

**Social:** Provide recreational activities in accordance with his individual needs, continue schooling and interaction with peers.

**Spiritual:** Provide access to appropriate spiritual care and support in accordance with the cultural and religious background of the family.
IT IS IMPORTANT TO Improve the quality of life of your hospitalized child by employing two strategies:

Enhance the good

- **Create familiar environments:** Create an environment that makes the child feel at home, with items such as toys, blankets, or photos.

- **Boost sources of support:** Use technology to alleviate the effects of isolation through virtual visits (videocalls, instant messaging, social media). That will give support and encouragement.

- **Allow the child to continue attending school:** Seek in-hospital schooling services to strengthen the child’s learning potential while sick. This will help consolidate the skills they already have, increase their self-esteem, and make it easier to return to school once he leaves the hospital.

- **Create memories:** Crafts, songs, stories, videos, and other resources are doubly good, because they help pass the time in the hospital and later help families and caregivers process their grief.
Reduce the bad

- **Relieve anxiety:** When your child is newly hospitalized or faces an invasive medical procedure, explain what is happening by using dolls or puppets representing them, or through educational materials (brochures, videos).

- **Reduce stress:** There are various strategies that have been proven to reduce stress for both children and their families:
  - Therapy with hospital clowns.
  - Activities that improve nighttime sleep (optimizing medication administration on daytime schedules, applying intravenous fluids during the night, or in-hospital campaigns compatible with night silence).
  - Use of integrative therapies (therapeutic massage, yoga, music therapy, and aromatherapy).
This series of modules on palliative care aims to provide essential information to mothers, fathers, and others caring for children with cancer, so that they can provide the best care and take appropriate actions to meet the developmentally appropriate physical, socio-emotional, and spiritual needs of their loved ones, as well as needs arising from the disease itself.

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