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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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THE PLAYFUL AS A TOOL FOR HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE HOSPITAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to know the perception and knowledge of parents/companions of children hospitalized about play as a tool for health promotion in the hospital environment. This is a descriptive research with a qualitative approach, carried out at the Municipal Children's Hospital of Imperatriz between February 2019 and January 2020, with 15 parents/companions of children under 10 years of age who had been in the hospital for more than 48 hours. We excluded companions who were not part of the daily contact with the child and who presented alterations in emotional state. Initially, the participants were probed about their participation in the research, so health promotion activities were carried out with the children and, later, the parents/companions were asked about the efficacy of the method used. The interview was recorded and later transcribed. After the analysis, the following categories emerged: Playful and health promotion; Communication and play; Notoriety of health and play promotion in the hospital environment. It was concluded that the use of play in health promotion is of paramount importance in the hospital environment, as it helps in understanding the issues related to the health issue when using play as a form of communication between the professional and the hospitalized child.

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INTRODUCTION

The process of hospitalization of a child can be traumatic, because it is removed from their daily lives, and cause losses that can remain even after hospital discharge (SANTOS *et al.*, 2017a). There are difficulties in interpreting events, thus leading to the conclusion that hospitalization and that moment you are going through is punishment (FIORETE *et al.*, 2016). In the context of hospitalization, play can be used to restore emotional and physical health, besides helping in the bond relationship between the health professional and the child, leaving hospitalization less traumatic and even shortening this time (BELARMINO *et al.*, 2017). In addition, it can be used as a mediating tool in the care process, and serve as a facilitator of communication and learning health promotion actions (JÚNIOR *et al.*, 2017). Another important aspect to be considered is that play can be used as a motivating tool and help the child to maintain physical, mental, social and intellectual health and, thus, the nurse can use it to mitigate the trauma caused by hospitalization and even reduce the time of care, attenuating the discomfort caused in the child (SANTOS *et al.*, 2017a). In addition to the physical problems resulting from hospitalization, there are psychosocial problems, which should be evaluated and that can lead to a new hospitalization or the aggravation of the disease. In this context, health promotion can play a relevant role, assisting in the healing process and in the prevention of new diseases. Thus, the nursing team should excel in holistic and non-fragmented care that sees the patient as a whole (MATOS; MUGIATTI, 2017). Health promotion is essential throughout the context of the Unified Health System (SUS), it must be permanent and based on all the principles of the SUS, and it is up to the health professional to be attentive to updates in the area, in order to provide humanized and updated care in the various areas (BRASIL, 2018). According to the Ministry of Health (2021), in Brazil there are policies related to health promotion that aims at health prevention, promotion and recovery, which aim, through various tools, to improve the quality of life with individual and collective actions (Brasil, 2010). Health promotion plays a relevant role, especially because it provides subsidies for the client to actively participate in the factors that influence their health and quality of life. Thus, health promotion should be carried out through educational actions that are also up to nursing team professionals (GIL *et al.*, 2018). It is of paramount importance that health promotion actions be applied within the hospital environment, with a preventive focus, considering that the patient should be the holder of rights and autonomy in his/her health/disease process (SILVA *et al.*, 2011). Health promotion is used to face current health problems, being one of the proposals that has most brought results to the health sciences, seeking to merge the various types of knowledge to achieve a objective (RODRIGUES *et al.*, 2015). In this context, play can be used in health promotion to transmit scientific knowledge aimed at self-care, using the pleasure and joy that games provide, bringing changes in the sad and pain routine of hospitalized children (JÚNIOR *et al.* 2017). During the research, it was observed the lack of studies focused on the parents' view on the use of play as a tool for health promotion in the hospital environment, so that filling the gaps on the subject becomes relevant. Therefore, this study aimed to know the perception and knowledge of parents/companions of hospitalized children about play as a tool for health promotion in the hospital environment.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Type of Study: This is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach developed at the Municipal Children's Hospital of Imperatriz (HMII), a reference in pediatrics that treats patients from the states of Maranhão, Tocantins and Pará. The hospital has a playroom where entertainment activities are developed with children during hospitalization time making the hospital environment more pleasant. In this space, undergraduate nursing students at the Federal University of Maranhão develop weekly health promotion activities mediated by the playful, linked to the Extension Project called Nurses of Laughter.

Participants: Parents and/or companions of children under 10 years of age who were after the second day of hospitalization, parents and/or companions over 18 years of both sexes were included. Those who were not part of the daily life of the child and who presented alterations in the emotional state preventing communication with the researchers were excluded.

Data collection: Data saturation occurred on the 15th. interview. The survey took place between February 2019 and January 2020 and was divided into three moments. At first, parents and/or companions were invited to participate in the research and agreed to sign the Informed Consent Form (TCLE). In the second moment, health promotion activities were carried out among children addressing topics such as: Importance of hand washing, Oral hygiene, Good diet, Body hygiene, Prevention of domestic accidents and Pediculosis. In all themes, ludotherapy was used as a tool through puppet theater, story readings, drawings paintings, dolls made of recyclable materials to explain how to wash your hair correctly, printed images, music and educational games. The students who assisted in the action worked with fantasies as a way to get children's attention. In the third moment, the parents and/or companions were questioned and expressed their opinions about the method used. The interview was done individually, based on the following guide question: Do you know what is playful and health promotion and its applicability in the hospital environment?

Data analysis: The participants' responses were recorded with a digital device and later transcribed in full. Content analysis was divided into three stages according to Bardin (2011): pre-analysis and exploration of the material, treatment of results and interpretation. To respect the right to anonymity, the participants were identified by a code name related to the names of characters from the children's story Sitio do Pica Amarelo of Monteiro Lobato. After the analysis and transcription of the statements, it was possible to identify three thematic categories: Playful and health promotion; Communication and play; Notoriety of health and play promotion in the hospital environment.

Ethical aspects: This research followed the ethical precepts and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Maranhão with opinion no. 3,222,552.

RESULTS

The age range of the research participants ranged from 23 to 42 years. It was observed that the majority of the children were accompanied by their mothers (73.5%), but that there was also a variety of kinship, such as father, grandmother and aunt, who had varied ages and schooling that varied between elementary school and higher education.

Play and health promotion: It was observed that many participants did not know what playful is, as reported in the following statements:

"Play are games and toys that facilitate learning". (Pedrinho)

"He helps kids with education, you know? But I don't know how to define what it is". (Tia Nastácia)

"I know what it is, but I can't tell you what it is. I'm ashamed and I'm afraid to talk and be wrong". (Narizinho)

"Yes, I know, but I don't know how to give a definition". (Iara)

It was evidenced that the parents and/or companions perceived the playful, as something related to health. It was also noticed that there are doubts about what health promotion is as reported in the following statements:

"Health promotion helps prevent overcrowding of hospitals by helping with healthier habits, in our case here, for children; has to start early". (Tia Nastácia)

"I know what it is, it's focused on the SUS, about breast cancer, that sort of thing". (Emilia)

"It is the project that facilitates treatment and health care to people". (Antonica)

After some lectures on health promotion using the playful, the parents/companions gave their opinion about the use of this tool:

"I think it's great, they can focus more on the issues you've been through". (Narizinho)

"It's an easier way to teach, since the drawings make the child pay attention". (Dona Carmela)

"It is important because it helps to hold the child's attention to the issues addressed". (Flora Caipora)

"The child learns more and better, encourages them to do the right thing". (Emilia)

"I think it's important, because he learns to do this care on his own and can take care of himself when I'm not with him". (Minerva)

"They can understand, using taught stories and take the practice to the day to day". (Antonica)

Communication and play: In the interviews, it was possible to observe that communication can be better with the use of play as a facilitating tool in the understanding of health care:

"The best way to pass any information to them is the playful, they already have the game in the day to day and like". (Tia Nastácia)

"Through play, the child begins to learn more". (Patty Pop)

During the research, participants were asked about the forms of communication used to teach children something and the answers obtained showed that while some reported that they did not use methods to perform this communication, others used only the conversation and, still, some participants reported using something playful, such as games, stories, movies and toys to explain something to the children, as observed in the statements:

"It's a different way of passing information to children". (Tia Nastácia)

"I use images to explain the subjects I want her to learn". (Cassandra)

When asked if they knew the playful as a method of teaching related to health, some participants reported that they did not know this method, but others already used it to teach the children, as observed:

"I explained at home in my own way, using the internet". (Dona Benta)

"I used it, but I didn't know the name, I use figures to explain it". (Cassandra)

"They can understand, using stories taught and take practice to the day to day". (Antonica)

"The children are dedicated to playing games and then try to do it themselves as well". (Minerva)

"Children learn more and better, encourages them to do the right thing". (Emilia)

"We have to transmit, because they are children and are vulnerable, it is important to keep hitting the same key using various methodologies". (Cassandra)

"They are weakened in this environment and playing is the best way to access them". (Candoca)

Notoriety of health and play promotion in the hospital environment: During the study, participants were asked if they found important health promotion information to be passed on in the hospital environment and if they agreed that play is an effective way to carry out health promotion actions as observed:

"In the hospital has a lot of disgusting and bacteria, it becomes a perfect environment to teach about it". (Dona Benta)

"I think it's important, because sometimes we don't know and the team would bring a lot of knowledge". (Cassandra)

Related to play, it was observed that parents reported that it holds more attention to children, increases understanding about the subject and play helps in the difficulties encountered in the hospital environment.

"In the hospital it's very difficult, and when there's a joke you can teach kids, it's importante". (Minerva)

DISCUSSION

Play as a strategy of health promotion helps to stimulate social and personal development being a tool to deal with feelings, thoughts, creativity, of hospitalized children, since they always feel the need to communicate, move, either through speech or expressions, thus bringing health benefits (SANTOS *et al.*, 2017b). The present study aimed to know what the parents/companions of hospitalized children knew about health promotion and their opinions about the use of play in the hospital environment. In Paraná, a study was conducted in a similar context where it was found that the age group of the companions ranged from 27 to 53 years and the predominant level of education was complete higher education, with the mothers most of them accompanying their hospitalized children (KOZAM *et al.*, 2016). The family plays an important role in the recovery of hospitalized children, assisting in reducing trauma and recovering health, since the longer the child spends hospitalized, the more parents become questions of the actions of the health team, becoming more participative in the interventions performed by the team (SOARES *et al.*, 2014). In the context of child hospitalization, play contributes as a tool for humanizing the hospital environment. Play is essential in human formation and is a way of imparting teaching to people, especially for children (RODRIGUES *et al.*, 2015).

Health promotion is focused on improving the health of the population and this construction has not recently begun (BRASIL, 2018) and, even in the hospital environment, it is important to build this knowledge (LEAL, 2015). With play, the child learns to develop attention along with other skills that are necessary for their development (TEIXEIRA, 2012). Health promotion actions should be part of a child's daily life, improving the health levels of the population in general, especially by the articulation between theoretical and scientific knowledge and daily practices, thus influencing the aid of autonomy in the care of society as a whole (PAES; PAIXÃO, 2016). To improve the level of learning of this knowledge, between children one can use play and play. Play is a childish language, and in addition to acquiring knowledge, it encourages the child to always want more knowledge (OLIVEIRA, 2017). Play helps the child in development and learning, as well as performing actions correctly being a facilitating instrument in the absorption of the subjects addressed (TEIXEIRA, 2012).

Play is important, because at the same time it is taught, it is also possible to evaluate whether the child can understand and learn the content that is passed on to it. In the hospital environment, these moments are important because they provide interaction between children and professionals, which allows the construction of meaningful knowledge about the issues addressed (CAVALCANTI *et al.*, 2015). Communication is part of the social skills developed mainly during childhood that helps the individual to work with stressful factors and autonomy in the future. The ability of

communication contributes to improve the way of living in society, but in order for children to develop it, it is necessary to participate parents, educators and health professionals (DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2017). Parents play a fundamental role in the psychosocial formation of their children. From this role in the education of children, influence arises on the behavior of the child throughout life and determine their attitudes and personality (LINS, 2015). Communication difficulties in childhood have been pointed out as a determining factor in the quality of family life, besides interfering in the healthy development of children and influencing the emergence of emotional and behavioral problems; the more quality communication there is within the family environment, the more problems can be avoided, whether physical, psychological or social (ROHENKOHL; CASTRO, 2012).

Health promotion seeks not only to prevent diseases, but also to reduce their effects, where the patient is the main subject of the changes and they are compacted between them and the health professional who passes the information (CARVALHO *et al.*, 2017). Health promotion contributes to self-care, since daily life is composed of several other activities (CARVALHO *et al.*, 2017). Health promotion is throughout the family cycle, interpersonal relationships and cultural differences (COSTA *et al.*, 2016) and can contribute to address difficulties in understanding health-related issues in general regardless of their age or school level. With regard to the hospitalization of the child, play can be used as a health promotion tool. In order to bring humanization to the hospital environment, the playful has been used, wanting to make it less traumatic for the child. For humanization it was taken into consideration that childhood is the phase marked by games, through which children learn and communicate (BRITO; PERINOTTO, 2014). According to Ordinance 2.446/2014 of the Ministry of Health (BRASIL, 2014) health professionals must always be updated to perform a better health promotion so that the target public understands the information transmitted, so that it promotes a safe, healthy and sustainable development. The playful linked with health promotion enables learning (BELARMINO *et al.*, 2017). The playful for health promotion helps in bringing parents closer to their children in the hospital (SILVA, 2018), and in addition to the points highlighted by parents in the research, it also contributes to the reduction of stress and fear and, combined with health promotion, helps children to have a better quality of life, decrease hospitalization time and decrease the number of times they return to the hospital.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the results obtained, it was possible to observe that, before the research, most parents already used the playful, but did not know the tool well and how best to use it, but after the exposure of the contents and the playful they found it interesting and of paramount importance to combine the game with health promotion. It was also observed that some parents also learned during the actions, where they were invited to participate, and informed that they did not know the past issues. Through the statements obtained, it was found that, in the view of those responsible, the playful with health promotion is something important and that it should be a continuous care, because the tools used help children to absorb the subject. Thus, the playful being used in health promotion is of paramount importance in the hospital environment, because within its attributions, in addition to providing humanization it also helps in understanding the issues, using play as a form of communication between the professional and the hospitalized child. Limitations of the research are the lack of resources in the hospital to carry out health education activities and the fact that some responsible people are dispersed during the actions and application of questionnaires.

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