

EFFECTS OF HOSPITALISATION ON CHILDREN

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Children's emotional and behavioural reactions to hospitalisation are effected by the nature of the events which have occurred within the context of the hospital environment. The stress of hospitalisation and its psychological impact on children has been subject to debate for more than fifty years.

A basic, yet often understated premise of the research undertaken to date, has been that the experience of hospitalisation results in psychological upset. This upset is reported typically to manifest through negative emotional and behavioural changes in children either during hospitalisation or after discharge. A variety of situational, environmental, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors have been found to contribute to children's responses to hospitalisation.

Finding out why some children cope effectively with hospitalisation and other do not, is of both theoretical and practical importance, in enabling health professionals to develop supportive strategies that may help children and their families cope more effectively with childhood stresses.

A review of the current literature has been undertaken and the following areas addressed:-

- Historical perspectives of hospitalisation
- Children's Behavioural and Emotional Reactions to Hospitalisation
- Individual differences in response to hospitalisation including:
 - age and developmental level
 - social and cultural factors
 - length of hospitalisation and reason for hospitalisation
 - personality factors, parental participation
 - preparation of children for hospitalisation
- Implications for further reseach