

## **SECTION 11: ACCIDENT/EMERGENCY AND OUTPATIENT SERVICES**

### **SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS**

Children admitted to the accident and emergency department are often frightened on experiencing pain or discomfort. Circumstances surrounding an emergency admission also tend to leave parents feeling anxious and distressed.

Extra care is often required to reduce trauma and unco-operative behaviour. A separate treatment room for children is preferable. It is desirable that staff in this area be experienced in working with children. Parents should be allowed to remain with their child whenever possible.

Waiting times for less urgent cases in accident and emergency, as well as in hospital outpatient clinics, can be long and trying for children and parents. Boredom may be alleviated by toys and books in an area with child-sized furniture and a blackboard.

The presence of a play leader has been demonstrated to be particularly beneficial to both children and the adults accompanying them (Alcock et al., 1985; Ispa et al., 1988; Williams & Powell, 1980). Children also displayed less anxious and aggressive behaviour when going to the treatment room.

Supervised play programmes can be provided by trained volunteers or students thus incurring minimal cost to the hospital with great benefits to patients and staff.

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

- ✦ 215 of the 253 surveyed hospitals (85.0%) have an Accident and Emergency Unit.
- ✦ 73 of these hospitals (34.0%) indicated that appropriate play materials for all age groups are available in the waiting area.
- ✦ 3 hospitals (1.4%) offer a supervised play programme, which in 2 cases is run by qualified staff.
- ✦ Outpatient clinics operate in 152 hospitals (60.1%).
- ✦ 62 (40.8%) of these have appropriate play materials for all age groups in their waiting areas.
- ✦ Supervised play activities are provided in outpatient departments of 7 hospitals (11.3%), 5 of which are paediatric hospitals. Qualified play staff are leading these programmes in 6 hospitals, one of which also involves Early Childhood students. The play programme in the remaining hospital is operated by trained volunteers.