

SECTION 7: PARENT PARTICIPATION IN PATIENT CARE

Basic and Nursing Care

SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS

Just as children want and need their parents' presence and support, most parents feel the need to continue to take an active role in their child's care in hospital. The value of parental presence during procedures, tests and on the hospital ward has long been recognised (e.g. Brain & Maclay, 1968; Mason, 1978; Peterson, Mori & Carter, 1985; Wessel & LaCamera, 1969).

Incorporating parents as part of the health care team has been found to have many important advantages. Both children and parents are more co-operative and less anxious. Parents express greater trust and confidence in the hospital staff and greater satisfaction with the hospital experience when they are involved in caring for their child in hospital (Wolfer & Visintainer, 1975).

Parents at home assume a primary role in the health care of their children, they are usually the first to recognise or identify a problem and basically know their child and their needs best. During the hospital stay most parents would like to continue to provide basic care for their child, and many also learn to assist with nursing care. Involved parents can provide a positive coping model, as well as being in a position to give reassurance and relevant information to their child, in preparation for medical procedures.

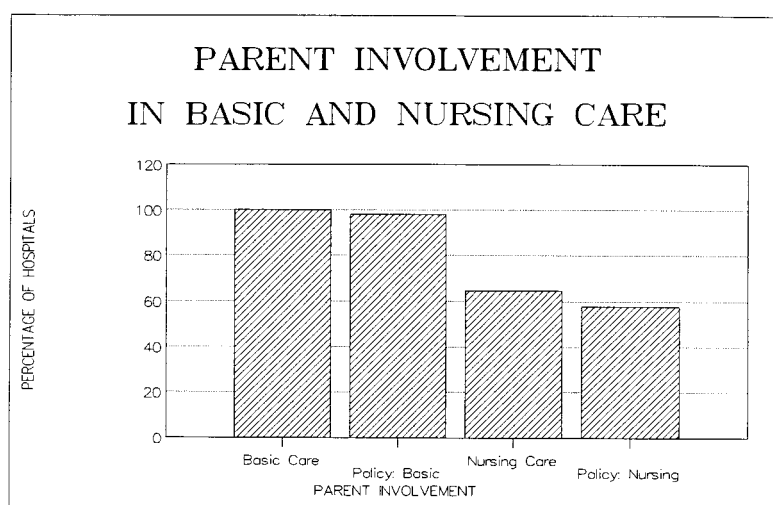
For successful collaboration between hospital and family, parents need clear information and guidelines to define their role in the hospital setting – tangible indications that they are welcome and have a legitimate place as part of the health care team. Without assistance and emotional support some parents may feel out of place or disoriented, and consequently will be of less support for their child (Terry, 1987).

Parents' involvement in general and nursing care of their child may reduce the length of stay in hospital, and result in parents feeling more confident and relaxed to take responsibility for the care of their child at home.

It is essential that hospital staff are convinced of the value of working with the parent-child unit in the healing process. A vital component for a successful parent-staff partnership is communication, encompassing the family, hospital staff and community services (Ayer, 1978).

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 8



- ✦ All 253 surveyed hospitals (100%) indicated that parents are able to participate in the basic care of their children.
- ✦ Parent involvement in nursing care, such as taking temperatures etc., is practiced in 163 hospitals (64.4%). This applies to 65.6% (N=141) of public and 57.9% (N=22) of private hospitals.
- ✦ Some discrepancies between policies and actual practice were found in both public and private hospitals, e.g. 29 respondents indicated that parents are involved in nursing care but that this is not part of the policy, whereas 12 hospitals do not allow parent participation even though it was reported to be hospital policy.

Medical Procedures, Induction of Anaesthesia & Recovery

SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS

The right of parents to be able to comfort and support their children should extend to all situations, including medical procedures and operations. Often the day of an operation can be unnecessarily traumatic. The benefits of parents being able to accompany their child into the operating theatre, to be present while the child is being anaesthetised and to be in the recovery room, have been demonstrated in many instances (Bush, 1990; Diniaco & Ingoldsby, 1983; Donnelly, 1990; Glover, 1990; Schulman, Foley, Vernon & Allan, 1967). Hospitals that allow parental presence provide a model of successful teamwork between surgeons, anaesthetists, theatre and nursing staff, orderlies, management and families.

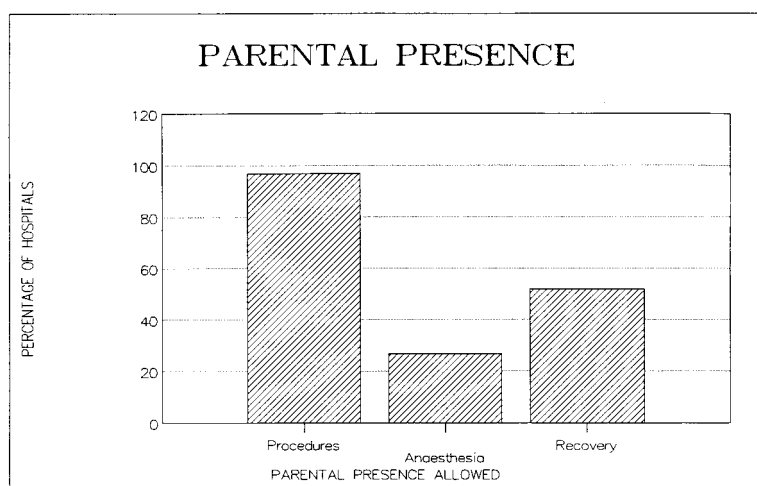
It is important however, that parents are sufficiently prepared for their role and the visit to the theatre, so that they can give maximum support to their children. Parents should never feel pressured to go beyond what they wish to do, as this is likely to increase anxiety in both parent and child. Parents should have the right to be involved as much as they wish, at an appropriate level (Bush, 1990; Glasper, 1990).

SURVEY RESULTS

Medical Procedures

- ✦ In most hospitals (N=244=96.4%) parents are able to stay with their children during actual treatments and medical procedures when the child is conscious (**Graph 9**). However, a number of qualifying statements such as ‘depends on procedure’, ‘up to a point’ or ‘if doctor agrees’, indicate that it is likely that the high percentage of positive responses could be misleading and highly conditional in some cases.
- ✦ Both inadequate facilities and lack of staff support seem to be the main reasons for not allowing parents to be present during procedures (N=9=3.6%).

Graph 9



Induction of Anaesthesia

- ✦ During induction of anesthesia parents are permitted to stay with their child in 63 hospitals (26.6%); this section was not applicable to 16 hospitals. No significant difference between public and private hospitals was found.
- ✦ 2 paediatric hospitals out of 7 (28.6%) reported that parents could accompany their child during induction. One of these does so only ‘in certain cases’ and does not permit parents into the recovery ward after the operation or procedure.

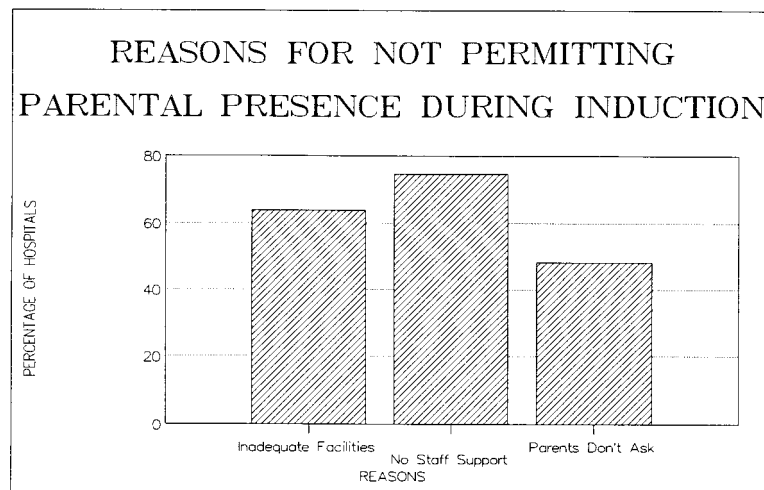
- ✦ Comments made it clear that parental presence is often not uniform hospital policy, but is dependent on the attitude of individual staff members, e.g. '2 of 4 anaesthetists allow', 'depends on doctor' etc.

Other comments indicate that even though respondents answered the question affirmatively, in reality parental presence seems not to be a common occurrence at the hospital; rather it is possible 'in some cases', e.g. if the child has special needs.

- ✦ Reasons given for not permitting parental presence during induction include: 'inappropriate reaction from families', 'not thought of' or 'parents would rather not be present'. One hospital commented that children are asleep by the time they get taken to the theatre due to pre-med.

Some hospitals however, indicated that changes are planned.

Graph 10



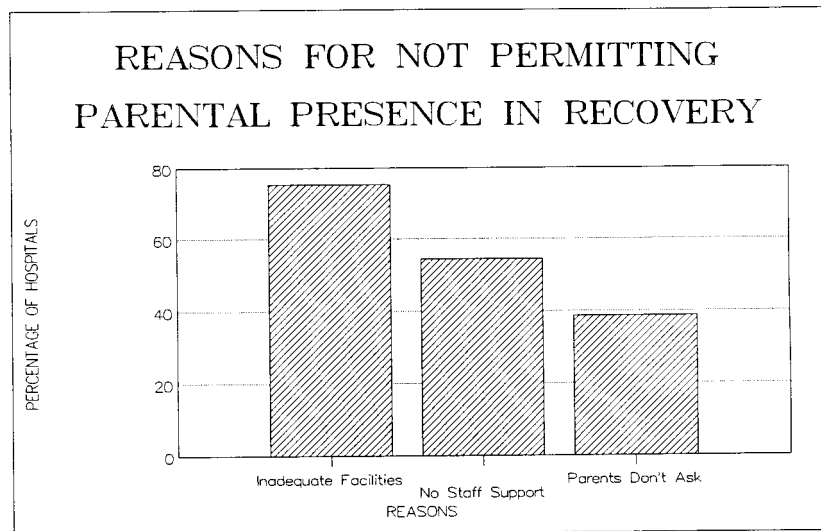
- ✦ 174 hospitals do not permit parental presence during induction of anaesthesia. As seen in Graph 10, lack of staff support (N=130=74.7%) was found to be the major reason, followed by inadequacy of facilities (N=111=63.8%).
- ✦ 84 respondents (48.3%) indicated that 'parents don't ask', which may be due to the fact that the possibility has not been mentioned by parents or preparation has not been offered to them.

Recovery

- ✦ 123 respondents (51.9%) of the 237 hospitals with operating theatres indicated that parental presence in the recovery room was permitted. This applies to 54.8% of public hospitals (including 4 paediatric hospitals) compared to 36.8% (N=14) of private hospitals.

- ✦ Comments like ‘if no adults in recovery’, ‘if child is distressed’ or ‘rarely happens’, indicate that this often seems to depend on certain conditions and may not necessarily be everyday practice.

Graph 11



- ✦ 75.4 % (N=86) of the 114 hospitals not permitting parental presence in the recovery room reported inadequate facilities as the main reason (**Graph 11**).

It appears that often children are not kept in separate areas from adults and it was frequently mentioned that parents could invade the privacy of other patient in the recovery ward.

- ✦ Lack of staff support is given as a major factor in preventing parents from being present in the recovery ward (54.4% = N= 62).
- ✦ 44 respondents (38.6%) indicated that parents don't ask to be there, while other respondents commented that ‘parents often ask’, especially if they are able to be present during induction. Possibly many more parents would ask if they knew they had the option and were prepared for the situation.
- ✦ In total, only 24 of all surveyed hospitals (9.1%) seem to have adopted a comprehensive practice of parental involvement, which is reflected in a policy encouraging parents to participate in the basic and nursing care of their child, including presence during treatment, induction of anaesthesia and in the recovery room.