

Seriously clowning: Medical clowning intervention during invasive examinations in children in hospital

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Medical clowning is known to be used as one of the supportive factors which effect children's experience in hospital. This qualitative research examined the subjective experience both of children undergoing an invasive examination in hospital accompanied by a medical clown and of their accompanying parent, as well as therapeutic elements in the work of the medical clown. The study took place in two outpatient departments (pediatric gastroenterology and a center for the sexually abused) in a hospital located in northern Israel. A convenience sample of 18 participants was recruited: 9 children undergoing invasive examinations and 9 of their accompanying parents. The children and their parents were interviewed according to an in depth semi-structured interview guide during the weeks following the hospital visit. The interviews captured the participants' subjective experience and perceptions prior, during and post the hospital visit.

Results indicate that the intervention of the clown for both the children and their parents changed their perception of the hospital, of themselves and of their life narrative. In addition, results indicate that the intervention of the medical clown in hospital during invasive examinations follows the model of crisis brief intervention therapy and that therapeutic elements such as empowerment, reversal of role, reframing and building a therapeutic alliance are part of the medical clown's role and are used by her. This indicates that medical clowns are a central, meaningful and professional factor for children undergoing invasive examinations in hospital and for their parents. Therefore, it may be advisable to incorporate medical clowns as an integral part of medical staffs who perform invasive procedures and to include the clowns throughout all stages of the hospital visit.

Keywords: Medical clowning, pediatric department, therapy.

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