



Tumaini La Maisha Child-Life Program

Muhimbili Hospital
Paediatric Oncology

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Child life program

1. INTRODUCTION

The child life program activities take place on the ward, at bedsides and in the procedure room. One main child life worker will lead the activities, engaging with children and their carer on a one to one basis. At any point throughout administering these activities the child life worker is unable to answer medically related questions he will write them down and ask a medical staff member to answer them.

2. TLM Child Life Program's 3 Main Elements

2.1 Preparation for medical procedures

Using carefully prepared photo story books of real medical procedures, equipment and personnel the child life worker will go through the appropriate book of either an operation, CT scan, Lumbar Puncture, ultrasound or X-ray. Explaining in child friendly language what is going to happen to them during their procedure and why; Giving the child a chance to ask any questions. This is to alleviate any unnecessary fears and panic when the child experiences it for themselves.

2.2 Medical play with cloth dolls

Child-life workers give each newly admitted child on the oncology ward a plain brown cloth doll a child's "hospital Rafiki." Then spend time with the child and carer sewing or drawing on their dolls, giving them faces, hair and clothes. The dolls can help familiarise the children with hospital procedures, by demonstrating medical procedure on them or can be used to entertain / distract the child or as a medium for them to express how they feel through.

2.3 Distraction during medical procedures

The child life worker will be present when a child undergoes a painful procedure, offering a distracting activity or toy. Talking to the child's carer about what usually helps and trying out new things. Making it clear that the toy, is not a gift but only to be played with whilst having a procedure. A sticker can be given as a gift. The idea is to not only to provide a service at the hospital using toys and stickers but to teach the carer to be able to distract and comfort their child themselves. Simple things like songs, counting and stories will be used.

Hand sanitizer must be used before and in between contact with each patient. All toys must be wiped with sanitizing gel and wet wipe or cloth

in between each child. The boxes and all the toys must be wiped and cleaned thoroughly after each day.

3. Preparation for Medical Procedures

A TLM child life worker will meet with allocated Doctor on the ward once a week to get a list of the children who will be getting a procedure, what it is and when that week. He will take the procedure book around to the children on the list individually and go through it with them. If possible he can use the child's cloth doll to demonstrate the procedure.

3.1 Items to be used

Procedure photo books, cloth doll and medical equipment.

1. Once a week meet with designated medical staff member to find out which children are having what medical procedure and when that week.
2. Take book around to the bed and sit with child and read the relevant procedure. Giving time for them to ask questions and really look at the pictures.
3. Use their cloth doll to show how and what is going to happen to them.

3.2 Medical Play with Cloth Dolls

A TLM child life worker will take the Doll Box around the ward once a week giving a doll to all newly admitted children who would like one. Then does weekly visits to update the doll, use the doll to discuss medical procedures, plan distraction strategies, add some more clothes, hair...

3.2.1 Items Required

'The Doll box' containing; an example completed doll, new cloth dolls, fabric, buttons, wool, embroidery thread, scissors, needles and thread, black marker pens masking tape, plastic tubing, medical equipment.

3.2.1.1 Activity to be done

- a) Give the doll
Take the doll out and introduce it to the child and carer at the bed side making it come to life and even talk. Make sure to say:

'This is your new friend 'hospital Rafiki' he / she is has come to keep you company on hospital and is yours to keep. He knows how difficult being in hospital can be as it's not easy to be away from home especially when you are feeling unwell'

'What would you like to call him / her?'

'Have a look at my one I have spent time decorating and making clothes for mine would you like to do that too?'

- b) **Create the doll**
Start with the face either drawing in marker pen or sewing on eyes and mouth in embroidery thread. Make clothes, hair ,scars,...
- c) **Continued decoration/creation of doll.**
Weekly the staff member will visit the ward again with the box asking the children to add to their doll if they want to or change it. Parents can be encouraged to help especially with young children.
- d) **Medical play**
If a child has an IV line put one on the doll too. Using masking tape and plastic tubing. Talking to the child the whole time about how it felt asking them if this is correct encouraging them to do it for themselves if they are able. If they are not constantly check with them how they want you to do it, maintaining their sense of control.

Demonstrate medical procedures before it happens to the child on their doll, if a child needs a lumbar puncture, she can watch her "hospital Rafiki" get one first. Using the real medical equipment.

Also allow free play with the medical kit.
- e) **Talk to the doll**
Use the doll to indirectly see how the child may be feeling by asking *'how is your Rafiki today? Does he hurt anywhere?'*
As children often project themselves in their play.
- f) **Company**
The doll can maybe accompany the child to an operation or a medical procedure to be a comfort or a play thing to help ease the child through a very stressful time potentially helping with distraction.
- g) **Help to get a distraction strategy**
We use the dolls to come up with coping strategies for the children "Does hospital Rafiki want to watch or look away when he gets an injection or examined? Does he want to sit on mama's lap? Blow bubbles?'

4. Distraction During Medical Procedures

A TLM child life worker will meet with designated member of medical team to find out the schedule of medical procedures that week. A slot of 1 hour will be spent on the ward twice a week with the aim of demonstrating or helping the parent / carer to learn how to distract and comfort their child during procedures.

4.1 Items & Procedures to be used

'Distraction box' containing: bubbles and blower, puppets, battery operated noisy toys, blowers, feathers, books,

4.1.1 Bubbles and Blowers

Bubbles, pinwheels, feathers, party blowers, instruments (kazoo, harmonica, recorder) all promote deep breathing. This helps the body relax and may make the procedure go by faster.

Encourage the child to "blow the pain away". Have a contest to see who can blow the hardest or longest, or who can blow the biggest bubble.

Practice breathing and blowing together when your child is not having a procedure done. Deep breathing is an excellent tool for managing stress and anxiety in everyday life.

4.1.2 Puppets

Puppets can be a fun way of distracting a child but also can be an indirect way of talking to a child about how they are feeling as they can sometimes feel more comfortable talking to a cute furry thing than a strange adult.

4.1.3 Story / Activity Books

Books that include bright pictures, repetitions the listener can join in with, different textures, sounds or pop up are fun for infants and younger children. Older children may enjoy books that offer a challenge, like searching for something in the picture, or a puzzle.

Open ended story books encourage children to use their imagination. Familiar or family favourite books are a welcome source of calm and comfort.

4.1.4 Electronics

Distraction can become easily portable and changeable with hand held games, video games, computer, TV and mobile phones. Use familiar favourites or new movies and games. Or battery operated toys that make noise and have lights.

4.1.5 Music

Music can relax and / or distract a child during a procedure. Use CD, MP3 player/ Ipod, music box or singing songs. Encourage the child to sing along, hum, click his tongue, clap or tap his feet to the music.

Some children enjoy learning the words to a popular song on the radio that motivates or empowers them, like a theme song. This can be played through your phone head phones or sung each time your child has a procedure, giving strength and providing distraction.

Writing your own silly songs to the tunes of familiar songs can be helpful and humorous.

4.1.6 Stress Balls / Squeezable Toys

Stress balls or squeezable toys such as stuffed animals or shapes and foam items are a great place to transfer pain, anger or nervous energy.

Count how many squeezes your child can do during the procedure, or how long he can do one BIG squeeze. How many times can he transfer the ball back and forth from hand to hand, or back and forth to your hands?

Older children can use their imagination to magically transfer the pain from their body into the ball or toy.

4.1.7 Touch or Massage

Touch can sooth and provide distraction to your child during a procedure or when he experiences pain. Rubbing, stroking or hugging a favourite stuffed animal or blanket is a restful way to promote coping.

Gentle massage can be provided to an accessible area during the procedure. Rub your child's back, arm, face or forehead using soft strokes.

Sing songs or say comforting words to your child while resting your head on his shoulder, close to his ear, or when facing each other in a comfort position.

4.1.8 Creative visualisation

Go to your favourite place. Coach your child to use his or her imagination and pretend to be in a favourite place — this can be anywhere your child likes to go! Your child should relax, breathe slowly, close their eyes and imagine all the things that he or she would be able to see, hear, touch and feel in the favourite place.

Older kids are usually pretty good at using their imagination to go to their favourite place. It can be fun to find out what your child's favourite place is and how it compares to yours. Children sometimes have more "active" scenes that relax them compared to adults. Just talking about favourite places is distracting even if you don't go there in your imagination.

5. **Weekly checklist for child life worker**

- Every child who is having a procedure has been seen
- Each newly admitted child has been given a doll
- Each ward has had the CD player for at least 1 hour
- You have spent 2 hours in the procedure room during procedures