The Experiences of Siblings of Hospitalised Children

An Integrative Literature Review

Context

Prevalence

Up to 90% of the British population have a sibling.

2,080,142 Children were admitted to hospital in 2018.

Key Facts

- Sibling relationships influence social and emotional development and are used to model relationships later in life.
- Children are particularly at risk of adverse effects of hospitalisation.

Current Literature

- No current review on siblings experiences.
- Other family members of hospitalised children experience increased depression and anxiety.
- Siblings of children with chronic conditions experience increased internalising and externalising emotions and fewer positive self attributes.

Aim

To Better Understand the experiences of siblings to enable the provision of comprehensive family centred care.

Literature Searching

- Six psychological and Healthcare databases were searched.
- Predefined inclusion criteria were implemented.
- Seven papers were identified and included for review.
- Snowball and internet searching were carried out to heighten likelihood of relevant research being identified.
- CASP and McMaster’s tools were used to critically appraise studies.

Methodology

Adapted Process of Thematic Analysis

Familiarising self with data
Generating initial codes
Searching for themes
Reviewing Themes
Defining Themes
Producing report

Age Differences

Differences in protective factors and emotion expression have been identified.

Implications for Practice

Open Visiting Policy
- Specifically stipulating siblings.
- Minimising separation and associated negative emotions and behaviours.

Information Resource
- Aiming to meet the information needs of siblings.
- Empower parents to disclose information.

Implications for Future Research

- Longitudinal Study
  - May be beneficial to identify any long term effects later in life.
- Information Sources
  - Interview other people in the child’s life to identify more effects.

Findings

Emotional Turmoil

- Three common emotions: anger, depression and anxiety.
- Anxiety more common in younger children manifesting in three paradigms of expression.
- More generalised anxiety in older children.
- Identified to display internalising behaviours.

Keeping the Family Together

- Separation is a major negative aspect of hospitalisation.
- Fear associated with unfamiliarity and disruption to routine along with loneliness and sadness.
- Negative effects countered by visitation (in older children) and one parent staying home (in younger children).

Growth through Experience

- Support took forms including peer, religion, family and health care professionals.
- Some parents doubted their ability of giving information with most withholding negative information.
- Sibling personal growth increased with appropriate explanations.
- Sibling responsibility increased with higher expectations and less supervision.
- Children displayed behaviours advanced of their age.
- Siblings demonstrated increased empathy, resilience, improved sibling relationship and decreased self-centredness.

References