

GODLY PLAY

Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Responses of Chronically Ill Hospitalized Children

Joan Farrell, Ph.D., RN
University of North Florida,
Brooks College of Health
Jacksonville, FL USA 32224



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This is an experimental pilot study that seeks to test a methodology for assessing the effect of a specific spiritual intervention, Godly Play, on very sick children who have been hospitalized. It is acknowledged that many factors such as progression of the disease, parents attitudes and behaviors, may also effect depression and anxiety in hospitalized children. The purpose of this study is to determine whether this spiritual intervention that accompanies medical treatment can make a difference in the life of a seriously ill child and whether parent satisfaction is enhanced by including this spiritual care with medical care.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Hospitalized children suffering from chronic life threatening illness are exposed to a spiritual intervention. This study will measure changes in depression and anxiety, spiritual growth, and frequency of analgesic medication use.

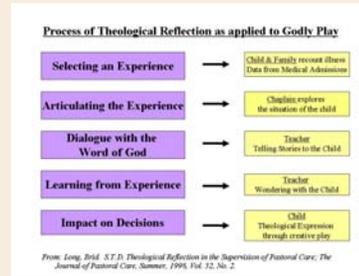
THE INTERVENTION

Godly Play is based on a Montessori approach to spiritual development. It uses stories from the old and new testaments and techniques that encourage children to explore their spirituality. The intervention is delivered by certified Godly Play teachers who present selected stories to the children at the bedside. In this approach the teacher helps the children on a journey of discovery to questions. Each of three selected stories, the Good Shepherd, and Abraham and Sarah are told using figures and props that draw the children into the story. A wondering time follows, encouraging children to think about the story and relate it to their own lives. The intervention also includes time for the children to respond through creative play. Godly Play provides children with an opportunity to discover spirituality in their own way. Children are encouraged to seek and find direction with God (Gardner, 1991).



THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

The theory underlying this study is consistent with the concept of theological reflection (Long, 1998). Theological reflection in pastoral care refers to five constructs: selecting an experience, articulating the experience, dialogue with the word of God, learning from experience, and impact on decisions.



HYPOTHESES

- Hospitalized children aged 6-15 years of age who suffer from chronic life threatening illness will demonstrate signs of depression during their hospital stay as measured by the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI).
- Hospitalized children aged 6-15 years of age who suffer from chronic life threatening illness will demonstrate signs of anxiety during their hospital stay as measured by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory.
- There is no difference in the CDI scores of children receiving Godly Play intervention and those children who do not.
- There is no difference in the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory scores of children receiving Godly Play intervention and those children who do not.
- There is no difference in the INSPIRIT Spirituality Assessment scores of children receiving Godly Play and those who do not.
- There is no difference in parent satisfaction with the hospital stay, as measured by Wolfson Children's Hospital Satisfaction Discharge Tool of parents of children receiving Godly Play and those who do not.
- There is no difference in sleep patterns of children receiving Godly Play intervention and those children who do not.
- There is no difference in analgesic medication use of children receiving Godly Play intervention and those children who do not.

METHODS

METHODS

SAMPLE

Forty children, aged 6-15 years of age, who were admitted to Wolfson Children's Hospital, Jacksonville Florida diagnosed with chronic life threatening illness were systematically identified through each daily list of admissions provided by the Department of Pastoral Care. After subjects were identified on the bases of the study criteria and following parent informed consent each was randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. Chronic life threatening diagnoses included: a variety malignancies, cycle cell crisis, renal failure and respiratory failure due to cystic fibrosis.

SETTING

Wolfson Children's Hospital is a specialty hospital that is part of the Baptist Medical System in Jacksonville Florida. It houses 150 medical, surgical and intensive care beds, as well as a neonatal intensive care and bone marrow transplant unit. Children identified for this study were receiving treatment primarily on the hematology-oncology and bone transplant units.

STUDY DESIGN

A partnership between the University of North Florida, Department of Public Health and Christ Episcopal Church Ponte Vedra was established to design and implement the research protocol. The study was approved by the Baptist Medical Center Institutional Review Committee and by the University of North Florida Institutional Review Board.

Following randomization, several pre-tests were performed. They included: the CDI index of depression, the State-Trait Anxiety assessment, and the INSPIRIT evaluation of spirituality. At completion of the pre-tests, teachers presented three selected Godly Play stories, over a period of three or more days, to children who had been placed into the experimental group. Parents who were present to hear the Godly Play stories with their children were also tested with the INSPIRIT evaluation of spirituality. Children assigned to the control group were given a copy of a fairy tale book, and did not receive any instruction or interaction with the Godly Play teachers.

Throughout the hospital stay, data was collected on the type and amount of analgesic medication that each subject received and on their sleep patterns as observed by nurses and parents. Following the experimental and control interventions, post-tests consisting of the same three tests given as in the pre-test phase, were administered.

At the completion of the study parents were asked to complete the routine hospital care satisfaction survey.

INSTRUMENTS

RESULTS

- Fifty seven percent (57%) of the children were Caucasian, 38% were Afro-American and 5% were of Latino origin. Severity of illness indicated the vast majority (72%) to be chronically ill, 10% very sick, 5% acutely ill and 3% terminally ill.
- Thirty-seven (37%) of the children were diagnosed with acute cycle cell crisis, 35% suffered various types of malignancies, 23% presented with cystic fibrosis and 5% were acutely ill awaiting diagnosis.
- Three variables showed significant difference before and after Godly Play interventions: Depression (CDI) $p=0.01$, Anxiety (STAIC) $p=0.04$ and Spiritual Orientation (INSPIRIT) $p=0.03$.
- Parent satisfaction with care showed a marginal difference between groups $p=0.058$.

RESEARCH TEAM

Joan Farrell, Ph.D., RN
Co-principal Investigator

Rev. James Cooper, D. Div.
Co-principal Investigator

Rev. Scott Brooks Cole, D. Min.
Clinical Coordinator

Leigh Mathias, BA, MSH, DPH (c)
Research Assistant

CONCLUSIONS

