

Attention and care to the pediatric patient: the experience of an Integrative Medicine Group in an Oncology/Hematology Center

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BACKGROUND: In Brazil, cancer represents the number one cause of death by disease among children and teenagers. If diagnosed early and treated in specialized centres 70% of those cases are curable with the patients having a good life quality of life. Taking care of a sick child brings challenges to everyone around her, including the medical and multidisciplinary team. Play activities should continue to be a part of her everyday life. Other kinds of treatment may also be a welcome to complement to conventional treatment such as chemotherapy. Integrative Medicine (IM) is the field of medicine that reaffirms the importance of patient/carer relations; it focuses on the person as a whole; it is based on evidence; and it acts alongside conventional medicine. IM makes use of all therapeutic disciplines for obtaining the best of health and cure.

HYPOTHESIS: Experience of the Integrative Medicine Group in the caring of paediatric onco-haematological patients and their families in the oncology/haematology and bone marrow transplant centre of a private tertiary hospital in São Paulo, Brazil.

METHODS: In 2015, 46 paediatric patients received more than 300 sessions from specialized therapists of the Integrative Medicine Group. 65% were between ages 0-9y and 35% were between ages 10-19y. Male represents 63%. Onco/hematologic diagnoses prevailed in 73% of patients and, among those, the most common cases were of acute lymphoid leukaemia (35,3%) and lymphoma (23,5%). The treatments seek to promote a balance between the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems for the reduction and control of stress and anxiety, while also generating a sense of warmth and comfort. The IM therapists provide the patient and caregivers tools for self-caring, stress management. These tools stimulate the perception of well-being to the patients and their caregivers, promoting physical and mental relaxation. Techniques such as yoga (light stretching, breathing exercises, relaxation and meditative practices), touch therapy (the application of delicate touch on the skin in a slow and constant rhythm), and therapist guided relaxation exercises are applied. The creation of a bond between therapists, patients and caregivers is essential in order to provide moments of play, joy, warmth and relaxation. Playful activities like placing a doll on the child's belly, so she can observe it going up and down during an abdominal breathing exercise or telling a story are among the techniques that help the child carry out the activities with the therapist. Usually, touch therapy is the predominant technic for infants. Pre-schoolers and youngsters actively participate in playful activities and Yoga whereas teenagers appreciate the complete sequence. Special attention is given to reduce the stress of primary caregivers who are the patient's

parents. They are stimulated to do the activities with their child and the therapist teaches them how to perform some techniques by their selves.

RESULTS The therapies offered by the IM Group enhance patients, caregivers and multidisciplinary team well-being and also promotes a friendlier environment during hospitalization.