



13 Pediatric Psychology

Chapter Summary

Up to a quarter of children and adolescents in North America have a diagnosed chronic illness or potentially life-limiting medical condition, such as asthma, diabetes, or cancer. Pediatric psychology is a specialized field in health psychology that integrates both scientific research and clinical practice to address the psychological aspects of medical conditions and the promotion of health behaviours in children and their families. The field of pediatric psychology was developed to address the needs of patients in pediatric settings and brings together several areas within psychology, including health, clinical, and developmental psychology.

Areas of major focus in pediatric psychology include coping with medical conditions, adherence to pediatric treatment regimens, coping with medical procedures, pediatric chronic pain, and pediatric palliative care. Furthermore, pediatric psychologists have expertise in dealing with a number of health issues unique to childhood and adolescence that often present as significant parenting challenges including sleeping, feeding, and toileting problems, as well as the stressors that impact developing adolescents. Pediatric psychologists also address the impact of pediatric health conditions on the family.

The increased use of technology within the pediatric psychology field has opened up the range of medical access and communications support for families. Research is ongoing to develop greater accessibility to these services. Additionally, research is focused on addressing the biopsychosocial needs of children coming of age with chronic disease and their transition to adulthood.

Essay Topics

1. How might a child's chronic or life-limiting illness affect the child's parents and family? (p. 303)
2. Which factors have been shown to affect adherence to treatment in children? (pp. 290–292)
3. What are some things that parents can do to help their sick child adjust better to his or her health condition? (p. 293)
4. What coping strategies have been found to be most effective for helping children manage the stress associated with medical conditions? (pp. 286–290)
5. What are the issues associated with children and their experience of pain? (pp. 292–299)
6. How has technology impacted the field of pediatric psychology? (pp. 304–305)

Weblinks

<https://www.apa.org/about/division/div54.aspx>

The Society of Pediatric Psychology provides links to a host of publications, newsletters, and special interest groups.

http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PsychologyWorksFactSheet_PediatricPalliativeCare.pdf

"*Psychology Works*." *Fact Sheet: Pediatric Palliative Care*, published by the Canadian Psychological Association.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/system/surgery/hosp_surgery.html

The Kids Health website offers advice for parents about helping their children cope with a hospital stay as well as the medical procedures they may undergo.

<http://www.sickkids.ca>

The Hospital for Sick Children provides a wealth of information on pediatric care for various conditions including cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, and cystic fibrosis.

Glossary

Chronic pain Recurrent and frequent pain (e.g., headaches, stomach aches, backaches) usually ongoing for greater than six months. Chronic pain is common in children and adolescents, as well as in older people, and can occur as a result of an associated medical condition or in the absence of any identifiable organic pathology.

Coping The ability to manage a chronic medical condition or how a person responds to medical procedures. Coping responses include simple behavioural strategies (e.g., distraction, deep breathing) as well as more complex cognitive strategies (e.g., cognitive restructuring) and vary by the person's age and development. Effective coping skills are related positively with many patient outcomes.

Distraction A widely used and effective behavioural coping strategy involving directing one's attention away from a painful stimulus (e.g., blowing bubbles, listening to music, talking with others, humour). Distraction is often used to deal with acute pain, such as a medical procedure, and can be self-led or parent/other-led.

e-Health (electronic health) Tools that deliver health services and information through the Internet and other related technologies.

Encopresis A problem of toileting that involves the passage of feces in inappropriate places (e.g., clothing) and occurs as the direct result of involuntary overflow incontinence, resulting from constipation.

Enuresis A problem of toileting that involves the involuntary passage of urine, most often during the night (e.g., bedwetting).

MEDi an interactive humanoid robot serving as an electronic, multi-sensory distraction tool for children undergoing medical procedures.

Palliative care Care provided to those who have been diagnosed with a range of medical conditions where curative treatments have failed or to those who require intensive long-term treatment aimed at maintaining quality of life.

Pediatric psychology A specialized psychological field, which encompasses areas of health, clinical, and developmental psychology and integrates both scientific research and clinical practice to address the psychological aspects of children's medical conditions and the promotion of health behaviours in children and their families.

Venepuncture Intravenous access for the purpose of blood sampling, performed by a phlebotomist or other health professional. It is one of the most routinely performed invasive procedures.