Whose Pain is it? Comparing Patient, Parent and Nurse Pain Perceptions
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Introduction
Pediatric hematology/oncology patients experience a wide variety of acute and chronic pain. Nurses and parents who care for these children often have different perceptions of the child’s pain level, which can result in inadequate assessment & treatment of pain. Our goal is to educate our nursing colleagues on the most accurate way to assess pediatric pain to better care for this patient population.

PICO
P: Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Inpatients
I: Consistency of nurse/parent & patient pain perception
C: Nurse/parent perception of patient’s pain vs. patient’s perception of pain
O: Accurate assessment & treatment of patient’s pain

Methods
A literature search was conducted to include the following databases:
- PubMed, CINAHL, EBSCO Host
The search terms used included:
- Pediatric hematology/oncology inpatients
- Pain perception
- Nurse and parent

Results
From the Literature Search, 10 articles were found, only 5 articles were relevant to the PICO question.

Meta-analysis: 1
Descriptive quantitative: 1
Descriptive qualitative: 2
Longitudinal study: 1

Discussion

Journal of Advanced Nursing

Meta-analysis:
-12 studies compiled comparing child/adolescent self-report of pain and parent/nurse pain reports

Findings:
-Results varied and limited by small sample sizes
-Nurse and patient scores were more closely correlated than parent and patient

International Journal of Nursing Studies

Descriptive qualitative study:
-Questionnaire asking nurses to indicate how they prepared parents for what they expect regarding their child’s post-procedure

Findings:
-Parents knew what to expect pre- and intra-procedure but not what to expect post-procedurally

Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing

Descriptive qualitative study:
-Parents asked to report most distressing symptoms their children experience

Findings:
-Pain is primary complaint among parents of this patient population
-Parent age affected parents’ main complaint (younger children: more pain, older children: more nausea)

Children's Health Care Journal

Descriptive quantitative:
-Compared child self report with nurse and parent reports of pain related to routine immunizations

Findings:
-Nurses reported lower pain than patient self reports, but there is no significant difference in parent and child reports of pain
-All reports of pain were positively correlated but the level of pain varied widely

Conclusions & Recommendations
More research with larger sample sizes is needed on this topic. Both patient and parent pain perceptions are important to assess. Parent perceptions of their child’s pain may differ by the child’s age, but not by sex, presence of siblings, diagnosis or prognosis. The more prepared a parent is of what to expect regarding their child’s pain, the more consistent the pain perceptions are between parent and child. Nurses should be cautious when considering their own perception of patient pain. They should be educated on appropriate assessment tools for child’s developmental level, as well as how to prepare parents on what to expect.

References

Findings:
-Pain was the parents’ #1 concern
-Symptom burden decreased over time

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