

I Went to the Hospital and I was Scared: Enhancing Emotional and Behavioural Coping During a Hospital Admission

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Intended audience: Presentation will be relevant to all health professionals, healthcare workers, carers and people with disability but will be of particular interest to health care workers working within medical and mental health inpatient areas.

Session Description

In one hospital in Christchurch, New Zealand, concern from parents and significant others drove a series of responses to improve the hospital experience for people with disability. It is well known, that people with disabilities are more likely to experience a broad range of health problems and are therefore frequent users of hospital services. Acute illness and pain may have a significant psychological impact on individuals and their families during these times. There is evidence of increased rates of behavioural problems, anxiety and depression occurring for this cohort in hospital. The coping mechanisms and strategies that are used are likely to mediate the influence of psychosocial factors on the management of their illness and studies have shown that the nature and quality of coping may positively or negatively affect final health outcome.

A resource has been developed to:

- ensure the inpatient experience for a person with disability is comfortable and safely meets their specific needs;
- provide guidelines for personal care, health care, and legal matters for people with a disability and acute health needs;
- facilitate effective communication between healthcare workers, the individual and their significant others;
- aid healthcare workers understanding of the impact of the disability on the person – this may actually be minimal.

In this presentation we will discuss and describe the resources developed and the education programmes designed to respond to the challenges of guiding staff to deliver professional and effective services to meet the unique needs of each member of this heterogeneous population.