

From Recreation to Creative Expression: The Essential Features of an Adolescent Inpatient Psychosocial Support Programme

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Abstract

Introduction: Adolescent Inpatient Units are now an established component of leading tertiary children's hospitals in the developed world. While different methods have been used to provide psychosocial support in these settings, there is little recent literature about these programmes. We aimed to identify programme goals and to explore the features that are thought to underpin an effective programme. **Material and Methods:** A qualitative paradigm was used to identify the essential features of the psychosocial support programme within the adolescent inpatient unit, Royal Children's Hospital, by drawing on the practice wisdom of experts involved in the development of the psychosocial support programme since its inception over a decade ago. In-depth interviews were conducted that were analysed thematically following recording and transcription. **Results:** Seven out of nine identified professionals were interviewed. These staff identified that while the psychosocial support programme had focussed on different activities since its inception, the goals of the program had been consistent over time. The essential underpinning features were reported to be support for the programme and communication between multidisciplinary health professionals. When this was effective, the overarching role of the programme was reported to be the promotion of identity formation in adolescents. **Conclusions:** This small-scale qualitative investigation reveals that identity formation has consistently been the focus of the psychosocial support programme in our adolescent unit, despite the different ways the programme has been run over time. Findings about the importance of support and communication are essential knowledge for those considering the implementation of similar programmes.

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