

*Correspondence***Play therapy: An effective approach to reduce anxiety in children with cancer**Reza Abdollahi ^{a*} 

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To the Editor

Cancer poses a significant challenge to public health worldwide and ranks as the second most common cause of death in children. Approximately 300,000 cases of cancer are diagnosed among children aged 0 to 19 every year [1]. The incidence of childhood cancer is increasing all over the world. A cancer diagnosis can cause serious psychological problems because cancer and admission to the hospital increase the feeling of pain, anxiety, and fear of death [2]. Children diagnosed with cancer often experience severe and persistent anxiety, which can have long-term effects on their well-being. The stress of being hospitalized, coupled with the limited understanding of their illness by medical professionals, the lack of effective coping strategies, and the pain resulting from invasive procedures and treatment regimens, all contribute to the anxiety experienced by these young patients [3]. Intense anxiety has the potential to impede the progression of treatment, heighten susceptibility to infections, and protract the recovery period, ultimately impacting the efficacy of cancer therapy and diminishing patient contentment [4]. Among the psychological interventions that can affect and reduce the psychological symptoms of physical diseases, we can mention play therapy.

Play therapy involves a dynamic and interactive connection between the therapist and the child during the game sessions. This therapeutic approach aims to establish a secure and nurturing environment for the child, enabling them to explore and address their emotional challenges through play [5]. Throughout the therapeutic relationship, the child undergoes a decrease in distressing symptoms, a shift in impulsive behaviors, a sense of being understood, emotional release, and a revised emotional understanding.

Engaging in play enables the child to communicate thoughts, emotions, past events, and wishes that may be overwhelming to them [6]. Research shows that group play therapy can be used as an effective solution to reduce anxiety and pain in children and adolescents with cancer [7]. Group therapeutic play is effective in social acceptance and hope for life for children with cancer, and the game is one of the reasons for improving social acceptance skills and hope for life in children [8].

In sum, play therapy is an effective approach to reduce anxiety in children with cancer, and the use of play therapy reduces anxiety and despair in children with cancer and can be used as a complementary treatment in conjunction with the main cancer treatments. Considering that children with cancer need frequent hospitalization during the treatment process experience various physical and psychological symptoms and have low self-confidence, psychological support such as play therapy is an important aspect of emotional relief and the psychology of children with cancer. Furthermore, children communicate their anxieties and concerns via play activities, allowing them to acquire an understanding of their medical condition and therapy. Therefore, it is important to use this approach when caring for children with cancer, and it should be considered and used in the care planning of these patients.

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Authors' contributions

Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work;

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Availability of data and materials

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Using artificial intelligent chatbots

None.

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