Pediatric nursing versus family nursing; views of professionals and parents of children in San Sebastian de los Reyes (Madrid)

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Abstract

Introduction: the situation of children health care in the Spanish regions is of variability and lack of a clear pattern regarding to the participation of nurses. This study was conducted to know the opinion of the professionals responsible for the child health program in a town near Madrid, as well as the opinion of the parents of the involved children.

Material and methods: a survey was distributed to 34 nurses and 11 pediatricians (all the professionals involved) as well as to 1004 fathers/mothers of the children included.

Results: from the parents, 99.6% prefer a nurse exclusively dedicated to children. All pediatricians felt in the same direction. As for nursing, only 7 (20.6%) prefer a mixed system of organization ("family nursing").

Conclusions: a qualified majority of the professionals and the population prefer a specific pediatric nursing model.

Key words:

- Nursing
- Organization
- Assistance
- Pediatrics

Enfermería pediátrica *versus* Enfermería de familia; opiniones de los profesionales y los padres de los niños de San Sebastián de los Reyes (Madrid)

Resumen

Introducción: el panorama de la asistencia a la población infantil en el conjunto de las comunidades autónomas españolas es de variabilidad y carencia de un modelo claro en lo que se refiere a la participación de los profesionales de Enfermería. El presente estudio se ha llevado a cabo para conocer la opinión de los profesionales encargados de los programas de salud infantil de una localidad cercana a Madrid, así como de los padres de los niños implicados.

Material y métodos: se ha distribuido una encuesta a 34 enfermeras/os y 11 pediatras (la totalidad de los profesionales implicados). También a 1004 padres/madres de niños incluidos en los cupos mencionados.

Resultados: el 99,6% de las madres o padres encuestados prefiere una enfermera/o con dedicación exclusiva a los niños. La totalidad de los pediatras opinó en el mismo sentido. En cuanto a la Enfermería, solo siete (20,6%) prefieren un sistema de organización mixto ("Enfermería de familia").

Conclusiones: una mayoría cualificada de los profesionales y la población prefiere un modelo de Enfermería pediátrica específica.

Palabras clave:

- Enfermería
- Organización
- Asistencia
- Pediatría

INTRODUCTION

In the past few years there has been disagreement among the collectives of pediatricians and nursing staff as to how child healthcare programs should be developed. At present, pediatricians advocate for the active participation of the nursing staff in the development of this program¹, with the sole requisite that the participating professionals have a level of training fitting the tasks that they perform.

At present, nursing professionals are divided in various groups with regards to their opinion:

- On one hand, there are those who demand working exclusively in pediatrics, matching their specialized training.
- On the other hand, there are those who avoid any work in the child and adolescent field, which feels like an imposition and a struggle to them.
- Last of all, there are those who defend the concept of serving the entire family, with nursing professionals capable of caring for both the senior and the child in the comprehensive field of Family Nursing.

This state of conflict and non-unified criteria in the field of Nursing is even seen at the level of Spain's various autonomous communities (AC), whose respective Departments of Health maintain different models of healthcare services. Thus, in Spain there coexist some ACs with a clearly defined Pediatric Nursing² (PN) model, others with a mixed model that combines PN and Family and Community Nursing (FCM), others with a defined model of FCM, and yet others where a single nursing professional combines both models, being responsible for PN services and also for a group of adult patients (a model that is increasingly widespread, since the 1:1 nurse-to-physician ratio is disappearing, and the current crisis is widening this gap.)

Adding to this debate, ACs differed in the way they recently enforced the decree on Nursing Specialties (Royal Decree 450/2005, dated April 22

2005)³, as some of them recognized and certified the work of the Nursing professional devoted to Pediatrics; while others never certified this activity and instead recognized for the purposes of certification "excellent" FCN services that were actually never provided by Nursing professionals who had always worked in Pediatrics.

This state of affairs is causing us to lose something that matters in the nursing profession, which is the professional calling and career choices. It used to be that nursing professionals chose to work in the child and adolescent or the adult fields for their personal satisfaction and as it suited their training and inclinations. But now the specific titles and personal choices are fading away to meet healthcare service requirements, which are, needless to say, influenced by the economic situation.

And everyone believes to be in the right in this debate, when studies have yet to be made to support any views on the matter.

The purpose of this text is to learn in a direct manner the preferences for the PN or the FCN model of both the professionals involved in the child healthcare program (pediatricians and nursing staff) and the families served by it.

Material and methods

In the Spring of 2011 surveys were designed and sent to pediatricians, nurses and parents of children aged 0-14 years in San Sebastián de los Reyes (AC of Madrid). This town has a population of 80,638 people (including 14,222 children aged 0-14 years) and three healthcare centers (HCCs), namely Reyes Católicos HCC, Rosa Luxemburgo HCC and V Centenario HCC. The questionnaires were personally given to and retrieved from:

- All thirty-four nursing professionals working in the aforementioned HCCs.
- All eleven pediatricians working in the three HCCs. Of these, four work in the morning shift with a PN assigned exclusively to them; five work in the afternoon shift, four of them with an exclusive PN and one with a PN that also works with adults; and two work in rotating

shifts with PNs whose schedules do not match theirs.

- One thousand and four parents of children attended in the HCCs who participated in the study.

Results

Results of the survey of the parents: 99.6% of the parents wish to be served by a specialized PN, and only 0.4% would choose a FCN.

Results of the surveyed pediatricians: all voted in favor of a PN-only model with fixed nurse schedules matching the physicians'.

Results of the surveyed nurses: see [Table 1](#).

Conclusions

- Practically all of the parents surveyed (99.6%) want their children to be served by a PN.
- 100% of the responding pediatricians prefer the model where PNs work with them as a team under the same schedule.
- Out of the 34 nurses that serve the population in this town:
 - 71.5% (five out of seven) of the nurses who work as specialized PNs wish to continue

with the PN model; the remaining two are open to the possibility of serving adults as well.

- Out of the 26 nurses that only serve adults (76.5% of the total nursing staff), 77% wishes to continue seeing adults only, and 19% is open to the possibility of serving both adults and children.

- We need to foster teamwork between the different professional groups in HCCs. Pediatricians and PNs must cooperate closely, since their work is complementary.
- It is our understanding that interdisciplinary relationships are very important in doing our work correctly and therefore in helping our patients.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors state that they have no conflict of interests in relation to the writing and publication of the current study.

ACRONYMS

AC: autonomous community • **HCC:** healthcare center • **FCN:** Family and Community Nursing • **PN:** Pediatric Nursing.

Table 1. Results of the survey of the Nursing Staff group

	No. (%) of professionals	Prefer to (No.)			
		See children only	See adults only	See children and adults	Have no preference
Pediatric Nursing Staff	7 (20,5)	5	0	2	0
Mixed-age Nursing Staff	1 (3)	1	0	0	0
Adult Nursing Staff	26 (76,5)	0	20	5	1
Total	34 (100)	6	20	7	1

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