YOUNG CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCES OF THEIR HOSPITALISATION FOR CARDIAC SURGERY.

Nina Mary Power

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Nursing.

Johannesburg, 2005
DECLARATION

I, Nina Mary Power declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Science in Nursing in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

__________________
______day of ______________, 2005
This study is dedicated to all young children who are admitted to hospital for cardiac surgery, with love.
ABSTRACT

The aim and objectives of this study were to explore, interpret and describe young children’s experiences of hospitalisation for cardiac surgery and to describe their parents’ opinions regarding significant changes in the children one month after discharge.

A qualitative design, grounded in phenomenology was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the children prior to discharge and with their parents one month later. The children’s interviews were augmented by drawings, which were used to keep the children focused and to highlight themes that were not identified from their verbal accounts of hospitalisation. The expertise of a clinical psychologist was sought for the analysis of the children’s drawings. The results of the analysis of the drawings supported the children’s verbal accounts of their experiences in hospital.

Children’s interviews revealed that young children experience and cope with hospitalisation for cardiac surgery very differently. Parents’ presence, pain and boredom were dominant themes that emerged from the children’s interviews. Behavioural changes and emotional responses included withdrawal, tearfulness, disturbed sleep patterns, sadness, fear, anger and happiness.

Parents’ interviews one month after discharge revealed a lack of communication between the nurses and the children.
It is recommended that further research be conducted with older children to determine the effects of stringent visitation regulations followed in the paediatric intensive care setting.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to all the young children and their parents who willingly participated in this study. I hope that the stories you have told me and that I will tell others, will help future children admitted to hospital for cardiac surgery.

To Hospital Management – thank you for allowing me to conduct this research. To the doctors and nurses on the unit – thank you for your assistance and support.

To Mrs A. Tjale – thank you for your valuable contribution, your continual guidance and support and for your time. It is all very much appreciated.

To Dr G. Langley and Ms V. Hemp – thank you too for the valuable contributions that you made to this study.

To Professor J. Bruce and the Department of Nursing Education – thank you for bestowing upon me the Shirley Williamson Bursary in 2004.

To my husband David – thank you for your encouragement and continual faith in me.

To my Mum and Dad – thank you for all that you did for me that allowed me to complete this study.

And finally to my God – thank you for your divine wisdom and guidance throughout this study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of contents</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of tables</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter One – Overview of the study

1.1 Introduction | 1
1.2 Orientation to the study | 1
1.3 Background to the study | 3
1.4 Problem Statement | 8
1.5 Significance of the study | 9
1.6 Purpose of the study | 9
1.7 Objectives of the study | 10
1.8 Researcher assumptions | 10
  1.8.1 Meta-theoretical assumptions | 10
Chapter Two – Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Research approach

2.2.1 Qualitative research

2.2.2 Phenomenology

2.2.3 Explorative research

2.2.4 Interpretive descriptive research

2.2.5 A Contextual study

2.3 Research method

2.3.1 Selection of participants and sample size

2.3.2 The setting

2.3.3 Data collection

2.3.4 Data analysis

2.4 Ethical considerations

2.5 Trustworthiness of the study
2.5.1 Sensitivity to context 32
2.5.2 Commitment, rigor, transparency and coherence 33
2.5.3 Impact and importance 35
2.6 Conclusion 35

Chapter Three – Presentation of Findings 37

3.1 Introduction 37
3.2 The participants 37
3.3 The data analysis process 38
3.4 Discussion of findings 42

3.4.1 The young children’s interviews 43
3.4.1.1 “I liked having my mommy with me” 43
3.4.1.2 “It was sore” 46
3.4.1.3 “I had nothing to do” 47
3.4.1.4 Behavioural changes & emotional responses observed by parents in hospital 48
3.4.1.5 Unique coping mechanisms 56

3.4.2 The parents’ interviews 57
3.4.2.1 “He was not himself” 57
3.4.2.2 “He is much better” 58
3.4.2.3 “The nurses didn’t talk to him” 60
3.4.2.4 “Only another parent can understand what it is like” 62
3.5 Conclusion

Chapter Four – Summary of Findings, Recommendations, Limitations and Study Conclusion

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Summary of findings

4.2.1 The young children’s interviews

4.2.1.1 “I liked having my mommy with me”

4.2.1.2 “It was sore”

4.2.1.3 “I had nothing to do”

4.2.1.4 Behavioural changes and emotional responses observed by parents in hospital

4.2.1.5 Unique coping mechanisms

4.2.2 The parents’ interviews

4.2.2.1 “He was not himself”

4.2.2.2 “He is much better”

4.2.2.3 “The nurses didn’t talk to him”

4.2.2.4 “Only another parent can understand what it is like”

4.3 Recommendations for the future

4.3.1 Recommendations for nursing education

4.3.2 Recommendations for nursing practice

4.3.3 Recommendations for nursing research
4.4 Study limitations
76

4.5 Study conclusion
77

References
78

Appendices
82

Semi-structured interview – child
82

Semi-structured interview – parent
83

Direct transcription of an interview with a child
84

Narrative written from an interview with a child and her mother
88

Letter to Hospital Manager requesting permission to conduct study
91

Letters from relevant authorities granting permission for study
93
LIST OF FIGURES

3.1 MARK’S drawing of himself in hospital  45
3.2 PAMELA’S drawing of herself in hospital  51
3.3 ADRIAN’S drawing of himself in hospital  52
3.4 MICHAEL’S drawing of himself in hospital  55
3.5 BRETT’S drawing of himself in hospital  59
LIST OF TABLES

3.1 A profile of the participants                           38
3.2 Themes identified during the interviews                42