A specific sibling program on a paediatric haemato-oncology unit

Trui Vercruysse, Astrid Indekeu, Inge Bracke, Marleen Renard, Anne Uyttebroeck
Paediatric Haemato-oncology, University Hospitals Leuven, Belgium

Purpose
Siblings of seriously ill children have their own needs. The family situation undergoes dramatic changes creating a lot of stress. The sick child becomes the focus of attention. The sibling may feel lonely and left out. Giving that prevention is better than cure, implementation of interventions addressing the psychosocial well-being of the whole family from time of diagnosis, is an ideal to work to. Siblings who lost their brother/sister are yearly invited to attend a mourning workshop given by psychologists.

Method
A questionnaire (n= 41) filled in by patients, parents and siblings revealed that the families ask activities while the patient is on the unit and during holidays and days off.

Results
Since 2005 a specific program aimed to involve healthy siblings in the treatment process of the sick child, started:

• at time of diagnosis, all siblings are seen by psychologists to explain the disease, to answer their questions and to help them coping with their emotions.
• on days off, siblings are welcome in the playroom together with patients and are looked after by the pedagogical staff.
• monthly, they have their own specific “sibling” activity.
• once a year, a guided tour is organised across the hospital.

Conclusion
A specific program dedicated to siblings made them more present on the unit. Parents are more concerned about their healthy children.