
**Presentation of a cognitive, learning and school support competence promotion
programme for children with cancer diseases**

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Background Paediatric cancer disease and its treatment introduce major changes in the patients' lives which, very often, interrupt for a long period of time the school attendance, the social inclusion at school and many other experiences associated with this stage of life. Cognitive functioning difficulties and disorders in the learning process are commonly a cause for stress problems. Occupational therapy is essential for these patients and contributes to their well-being.

Methods After indication of the needs stated by parents, it was created a cognitive, learning and school support competence promotion programme, which is being implemented in hospital context. Through playful and well-adjusted activities, this project aims: to develop children's intellectual, social and emotional competences adjusted to their age; to avoid school and social isolation and to integrate pediatric cancer patients at school in order to preserve their psychosocial development and, consequently, assuring the permanence of the learning process and avoiding potential learning disorders.

Results The Programme "Aprender Mais" contemplates the capacities documented as deficient on children diagnosed with cancer diseases. Though in its experimental phase of implementation, the expected results are: developing visual and hearing memory, improving attention/ concentration levels, increasing motivation and the capacity and speed of processing information, rising verbal and non-verbal competences, the arithmetic performance and, as a result, the school/ academic improvement and the facility in the school reintegration process.

Conclusion This programme, being it pioneer in Portugal, will contribute to the well-being and quality of life of patients, taking into account their occupational health and assuring the continuity of the learning and development process of primary, middle and high school students. Accordingly, we believe we can positively contribute to their psycho emotional health and to a more effective return and reintegration in the group. It's also essential to point out the importance of this programme in including the education/ instruction of groups of schoolmates and teachers of children with cancer problems.

Research implications To contribute to a better understanding of the psychosocial consequences of the childhood cancer and its implications on the quality of life of the children with these diseases. To promote the importance of occupational health of the children with cancer either in ambulatory or admitted to hospital and in subsequent phases. To test the effectiveness of these kinds of interventions in preventing social, cognitive, emotional and school problems caused by cancer diseases, as well as in promoting health.

Clinical implications To contribute to emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary effort for the health and the well being of patients, family and all the others involved in the long cancer development of the pediatric patients. The pain associated to the disease, the treatments and the consequent effects in the (re)organization of life after a serious diagnosis cannot/ should not be the core of these children and families' lives.