

Family Members' Perceptions of Their Psychological Responses 1-Year Following Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) Hospitalization: Qualitative Findings from The Caring Intensively Study

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Background:

- PICU hospitalization can have a profound impact on child survivors and their families.
- There is limited research on children's long-term recovery within the context of the family following critical illness.
- This study explores children's and parents' perceptions of long-term psychological and behavioral responses within the context of the family one year following PICU hospitalization.

Methods:

Multi-site prospective cohort study aimed to examine children's psychological and behavioral responses over a 3-year period following PICU hospitalization. An interpretive descriptive design was used to explore children's recovery one-year post-discharge. Purposive sampling was used to select 17 families, including 16 mothers, 6 fathers, and 9 children. Semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews were conducted. Data were analyzed iteratively using the constant comparison method.

ACADEMIC P.E.A.R.L.S

Pediatric Evidence And Research Learning Snippet



Long-term psychological impact of PICU hospitalization

Results:

- Families described efforts to re-adapt to routine life and find a new normal following PICU hospitalization.
- Finding a New Normal consisted of four major themes: 1) Processing PICU Reminders and Memories, 2) Changing Perceptions of Health and Illness, 3) We Are Not the Same, and 4) Altered Relationships.
- Participants described significant emotional and behavioural changes during the year following discharge.
- Psychological impact of individual family members' experiences led to changes in their sense of self, which affected family dynamics.
- PICU memories and reminders impacted participants' perceptions of childhood health and illness and resulted in increased vigilance.
- Parents and siblings demonstrated increased concern for the child survivor's health, and the experience of long absences and new or altered caregiving roles resulted in changes in relationships and family dynamics.

Conclusions: PICU hospitalization impacted the psychological well-being of all family members as they sought to re-establish a sense of normalcy one year following discharge. Parent and child experiences and responses were closely interconnected.

Key message: The Caring Intensively study highlights the importance of increased follow-up care aimed at supporting the family's psychological recovery.

EXPERT COMMENT

“PICU survivors are at risk for developing adverse psychological and behavioral outcomes. Also, the family of a critically ill child experiences anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances in addition to social and financial stress. Psychological morbidity following a PICU admission must be addressed as it can lead to disturbances in family functioning; which in turn, can have a major impact on child health.”

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With warm regards,

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Reference

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