“Say Less Show More”: The development and introduction of visual supports to assist children during health care visits to an Emergency Department

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Background

• Any child presenting to a health professional may not fully understand what is going to happen.

• Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities have higher rates of health conditions.

• Difficulties in communication can contribute to barriers to good healthcare.

• Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) strategies are widely used outside healthcare settings to assist communication with children with disabilities.
Aim

- Develop, educate and introduce visual tools (visuals) to improve communication between health professionals and young children and/or children with disabilities presenting to a tertiary Paediatric ED.
Method – Implementation Study

1. Steering committee was formed
2. Visuals were developed
3. First survey - on the visuals to parents in 2x EIS
4. Development of Education Package
5. Training of the ED health staff
6. Second survey - on the training to ED staff
7. Implementation of the use of visuals in the ED
8. Third survey - to ED staff and to parents on the use of the visuals
9. A final set of visuals was developed for public use
Method – Implementation Study

1. Steering committee was formed
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act  plan

study  do
Method – Implementation Study

1. Development of Education Package
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3. Second survey - on the training to ED staff

Say Less Show More
5 Tips for using Visual Aids with Children with Disability

1. Include Parents and Carers.
   They know their child best and may have used visual aids before.

2. Show the Child the Visual Aid.
   Make sure you get down to their level so they can see the pictures.

3. Share the story with the Child.
   Point to the photos or picture symbols as you or go through the photos.
   Give the child some extra time to look and think about the pictures.

   Use single words or short sentences to explain what is going to happen.

5. Remember other ways to use visual aids.
   Use objects in the room and make your gestures stand out to help the child understand directions.
Method – Implementation Study

1. Implementation of the use of visuals in the ED

2. Third survey – to ED staff and to parents on the use of the visuals

3. A final set of visuals was developed for public use

Research shows that visual aids help young children living with disability. They are also helpful in healthcare settings and may be useful for other young children. The Children’s Hospital at Westmead and our partner agencies are aiming to support families to access the healthcare they need for their children living with disability, and seek to be inclusive of all our community members. The ‘Say Less and Show More’ initiative shows children that hospital staff are here to help, and what to expect during a physical exam or procedure. To make this project a success we want to work with families just like yours. Your experience with this visual aid will directly influence future development of the project.

Your feedback matters to us! Please let us know about your experience by completing our survey, and we hope you find this a useful tool during your visit to our hospital.
Results: first evaluation of the visuals

• 14 (82%) felt child would be interested in looking at visuals before going to a health care visit.
• 15 parents (88%) thought clinicians should use visuals during appointments.
• 15 (88%) indicated that visuals would be useful in helping child understand more about what happens before and during visits to a health care professional.
• 14 (82%) felt child would understand better if a health care professional used the visuals before having a procedure.
• 6 parents recommended changes.

“It would be a great resource for children who can be very anxious about hospital visits. This is a great initiative”
Results: post education evaluation

- Confidence in using Visuals after the presentation
- Presentation addressed the objectives
- Learnt about DD from education package
- Previous experience in using Visuals or similar
- Previous knowledge on disabilities

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS</th>
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Outcome results – Training evaluation

“Makes you more aware of the needs of children with disabilities & how we can help them with their hospitalisation experience”

“Excellent explanation of how this project will be introduced to ED and our role in implementing”
Results – evaluation of the use of visuals by ED staff

Staff survey post use of visuals

- Visuals were relevant for the task
- Easy to use
- Recommend or use it again

NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS

5 (very high) 4 3 2 1 (very low)

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"I was sceptical of the benefit of this tool. We cannulated a child presenting with behavioural issues who was stressed about the procedure. The tool completely calmed the child. Nitrous had been planned and was not used due to effectiveness of tool. Need same tool for Nitrous, gluing & plastering!"
Results - Evaluation of the visuals by Parents

Parents survey post use of visuals

- Helped the child understand the procedure
- Easy to use
- Use it again
- Doctors and nurses should use visuals

RATED QUESTIONS

NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS

0 5 10 15 20 25 30

5 (very high) 4 3 2 1 (very low)
Results – parents feedback

"Great for the children to see the procedure of what will happen to them especially when they ask what is going on. Easy language and easy for them to follow”

“I would love to be able to make changes/additions to the words so that it would be really relevant to my son i.e. to have it accessible on a website and then be able to make some changes. For example, my son calls it a "finger hug" when nurses are taking his pulse.”
I am having a blood test.

I sit on the bed. I keep my arm still. My Mum or Dad will stay with me.
Conclusion

• Visuals are cheap, easy to use and a well received tool to improve communication.
• They have the potential to reduce communication barriers to healthcare.
• Clinical staff were easily trained
• Further research is needed

• Limitations
Strategies for Sustaining and Spreading Improvement

• Training and practice are embedded within routine department procedures.

• SLSM visuals are downloadable from the internet

• A training module and a guide to develop individualized visuals according to needs is available too.

The Say Less Show More project team

From left: Lilly Wicks (Lifestart), Eunice Ly (Koorana), Dr Silvia Goldstein (SCHN), Dr Jacqueline Small (DSU) and Batool Spahi (SCHN).

Absent: Tracey Szanto (ACI), Dr Mary McCaskill (SCHN), Dr Richard Widmer (SCHN), Dr Victoria Ward (SCHN), and Meg Johnson FACs.
Other project team members

• Batool Spahi
• Victoria Ward

• ACI (NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation) – Intellectual Disability Network
• Lifestart
• Koorana
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