

An educational play therapy intervention deconstructed

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If you are an allied health practitioner who works in paediatrics, chances are you have met a child and family for an appointment that has resulted in an unexpected lengthier treating time or even cancellation due to non-compliance and/or anxiety. Though these cases can be frustrating, help can be near. Educational Play Therapists (EPTs) work to support children and families, and the wider allied health, nursing and medical teams to identify the stressors that may trigger anxiety related to hospital and gain mastery over the hospital experience. Seen as glorified "Play Ladies" in the past, EPTs utilise a variety of stress, coping, and family theories in order to prioritise case load and formulate interventions with children and families that are within EPT scope of practice and ethically sound.

This poster will deconstruct the art and science of a play therapy intervention. The aims of this poster will be to (1) describe the role of EPTs within a paediatric health service, (2) identify stress points a child and family may experience during a typical hospital visit, and (3) strategies that EPTs as well as Allied Health clinicians can use during their work with children and families in order to achieve ideal outcomes.

The audience will be taken on a journey through a hospital experience, viewed through the eyes of a child and their family. The impact of various environmental, developmental and psycho-social factors will be identified, as well as potential stressors that may lead to suboptimal outcomes for the child and their family (such as non-compliance and anxiety). The key components of an EPT intervention will be established, including discussion of why certain EPT interventions may be required, according to identified stress points.