

Network Kids: a Project for Children of Cancer Patients. Analyses of Impact on Quality of Life and Coping for Families Affected

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Abstract:

The well being of the whole family is fundamental for the quality of life for patients. In particular, children with parents suffering from cancer need our intensive attention. Our "Network Kinds" is located in rural Bavaria, Germany. It is attached to an oncologic practice, giving aid at different levels: it offers psychological help, includes school psychologists and teachers when schooling problems arise, finances private tutoring or gives assistance in finding an apprenticeship.

We place special emphasis on joint leisure activities and excursions that are accompanied by trained personnel. This undertaking is unique in Bavaria and has found great acceptance with our patients and their kin. The "Network Kinds" is privately funded and managed by two employees of the oncologic practice and has been active since 2012, including well over 50 children.



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Methods:

To assess the project's impact on quality of life, school performance, family situation and social factors, standardized questionnaires for children and parents taking part since for at least six months were analyzed. A total of 38 children and 27 parents were evaluable.

Results Children (n=38):

- The median age of the children was 10,3 years (range 4.5 to 17).
- 79% of the children stated that their parents illness was very hard on them
- 100% stated that their overall situation and their coping improved considerably through the Network
- 81% stated to have established new friendships
- 100% enjoy the activities offered
- 100% would recommend this project.
- Interestingly, 78% stated that they do not talk to the other children about their parents illness at all.

Results Parents (n=27):

- 67% of parents had a palliative treatment
- 88% reported a significant relief of family strain since participating
- 100% stated that their children have a great benefit
- 100% that the families coping is strongly improved
- 50% report that their child has significantly worsened in school since diagnosis, but the project had a positive effect on performance since participating
- 100% stated that all families confronted with cancer should have the possibility to participate in a project like the "Network Kids"

Conclusion:

Our project the "Network Kinds" is a affordable but rather time intensive undertaking, improving QOL, stress coping and children's development in cancer ridden families.

We conclude that a financial support and broader implementation by the health system is justified for all families interested.

Facts:

- "Network Kinds" have been active since 2012
- Meanwhile over 50 children are enrolled
- Participation is free
- The project is financially supported by donations of the "Verein zur Verbesserung der ambulanten und palliativmedizinischen Versorgung in Landshut e.v."

