

# Therapeutic toy and nursing assistance: integrative review

## Brinquedo terapêutico e a assistência de enfermagem: revisão integrativa

## Juego terapéutico y cuidados de enfermería: una revisión integradora

Débora dos Santos Oliveira<sup>1</sup>, Thais Vilela de Sousa<sup>2</sup>, Mayara Cândida Pereira<sup>3</sup>, Francidalma Soares Sousa Carvalho Filha<sup>4</sup>,  
Marcus Vinicius da Rocha Santos da Silva<sup>5</sup>, Iel Marciano de Moraes Filho<sup>6</sup>

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# REVISA

1. Universidade Paulista, Campus Brasília. Brasília, Federal District, Brazil.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0703-0520>

2. Universidade Federal de Goiás, Nursing School, Graduate Nursing Program. Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7498-516X>

3. Universidade Católica de Brasília. Brasília, Federal District, Brazil.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0242-6262>

4. Universidade Estadual do Maranhão. Balsas, Maranhão, Brazil.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5197-4671>

5. Regional Nursing Council. Curitiba, Parana, Brazil.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5905-6434>

6. Universidade Paulista, Campus Brasília. Brasília, Federal District, Brazil.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0798-3949>

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### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** identificar a produção científica acerca das práticas profissionais na aplicação do brinquedo terapêutico e fatores relacionados a assistência de enfermagem direta prestada à criança no uso dessa ferramenta. **Método:** revisão integrativa da literatura. Artigos apresentados por: título, ano de publicação, base de dados, periódico de publicação, nível de evidência segundo o método Grade, método e o enfoque do brinquedo terapêutico. Discutidos e caracterizados por temas centrais: ludoterapia, a importância do brincar, a humanização na assistência de enfermagem, os benefícios da utilização desses brinquedos e as dificuldades da implementação do brinquedo terapêutico. **Resultado:** o estudo possibilitou elucidar a importância dos brinquedos terapêuticos na hospitalização das crianças, tal como a relevância do brincar como método de intervenção de enfermagem, de humanização, seus benefícios e dificuldades. **Conclusão:** É recomendado que a literatura a respeito do tema seja cada dia mais inserida na educação continuada dos profissionais atuantes na área e que também possa ser desenvolvido o tema a partir dos estudos durante o processo formativo de novos enfermeiros. **Descritores:** Enfermagem pediátrica; Jogos e brinquedos; Assistência de enfermagem.

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to identify the scientific production about professional practices in the application of therapeutic play and factors related to direct nursing care provided to children in the use of this tool. **Method:** integrative literature review. Articles presented by: title, year of publication, database, periodical of publication, level of evidence according to the Grade method, method and the approach of therapeutic play. Discussed and characterized by central themes: ludotherapy, the importance of playing, humanization in nursing care, the benefits of using these toys and the difficulties of implementing therapeutic toys. **Results:** the study made it possible to elucidate the importance of therapeutic toys in children's hospitalization, as well as the relevance of playing as a method of nursing intervention, of humanization, its benefits and difficulties. **Conclusion:** It is recommended that the literature on the subject is increasingly inserted in the continuing education of professionals working in the area and, this way, the theme can also be developed from studies during the training process of new nurses. **Descriptors:** Pediatric nursing; Games and toys; Nursing care.

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** identificar una producción científica acerca de las profesiones profesionales en la aplicación de brinquedo terapias y fatigas relacionadas con la asistencia de enfermería directa prestada a la crianza sin uso de fermentación. **Método:** revisión integrativa da literatura. Artículos apresentados por: título, ano de publicação, base de dados, periódico de publicação, nível de evidência segundo o método Grade, método y enfoque de brinquedo terapêutico. Discutidos y caracterizados por temas centrales: ludoterapia, una importancia para llevar, una humanización de asistencia de enfermería, los beneficios de la utilización de los brinquedos y las dificultades de implementación del tratamiento terapéutico. **Resultado:** o possibilidade de dilucidar la importancia de dos terapias terapéuticas hospitalarias de hospitalización, como la relevancia de llevar como método de intervención de enfermería, humanización, beneficios y dificultades. **Conclusión:** se recomienda una literatura respetuosa del tema cada día más inserida en la educación continuada de profesiones orientadas en el área y que también puede ser desarrollado o tema de dos estudios durante el proceso formativo de novos enfermeros. **Descritores:** Enfermería pediátrica; Juegos y juguetes; Cuidados de enfermería.

## Introduction

The disease and hospitalization associated with invasive and painful procedures create highly stressful experiences for children. Playing, among other functions, helps in the development of communication and rescues the help relationship, contributing to the verbal and non-verbal expression between the health professional and the child. Therefore, these approaches provide a better understanding of these patient's feelings and needs, facilitating adherence to treatment.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the therapeutic toy is used to relieve anxiety caused by atypical situations characterized by difficulties in understanding or facing a difficult experience. It offers the opportunity for safe expression of feelings, transferring them to the characters of the game or to the professional the desires covered during the treatment opening, creating a type of make-believe and then allowing the child to accept the treatment more easily, in addition to making the environment that it is less terrifying.<sup>2</sup>

It can be classified into three types: dramatic therapeutic toy that allows the child to reveal experiences that have difficulty of speaking, thus relieving tension, fears, expressing their needs and feelings; instructional, which is used before therapeutic procedures, in order to prepare the child and facilitate the understanding about the procedure to be performed; and the trainer, to explain about physiological functions that assist the child in self-care and to prepare them to accept their new condition of life. In this way, the therapeutic toy allows to alleviate the radical changes in hospitalization and possible maternal separation, which can become a type of punishment or aggression, which in turn can develop feelings of guilt or emotional abandonment. These feelings can cause, in the child, changes in language and gait, digestive disorders, constant infections, behavioral changes and also behavioral disorders such as: excessive irritability, altered sleep, aggressiveness, which negatively influences the treatment and increases the degree of suffering.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of hospitalization and illness, parents presence is very importance. The sudden change of environment, symbolized by the act of leaving the comfortable home, with their own toys and the family presence, for a stay at hospital in difficult circumstances, characterized by painful procedures, further transform the hospital environment into a threatening and stressful one.<sup>3-4</sup>

Nursing has the science of caring and needs to act in order to make the child's stay in the hospital as pleasant as possible. For this, it is important to establish a bond of trust between the health professional, the child and the companion. In this way, the therapeutic toy can be the instrument for this link. The team of professionals who cares for children should take advantage of the potential of playing, which in addition to physiological improvement, obtains psychological improvement, practicing humanization and holistic care for hospitalized children.<sup>5</sup>

In Brazil, the resolution N. 295/2004 of the Federal Council of Nursing, in Article 1, provides legal competence to the nursing professional who works in the pediatric area for the practical use of therapeutic toys in the care provided to the hospitalized child and family.<sup>6-8</sup> But although the use of therapeutic toys by the profession's supervisory body is foreseen and regulated, there is still no

consensus on how professional practices will occur in the application of this tool or even the potential and difficulties in its use are not known.

Therefore, the present study aimed to identify the scientific production about professional practices in the application of therapeutic toys and factors related to direct nursing care provided to children in the use of this tool.

## Method

This is an integrative review of the scientific literature on the influence of therapeutic play on pediatric nursing care. The integrative review is a study that takes place from the analysis of relevant research from secondary sources through a bibliographic survey that gathers knowledge about the phenomenon to be investigated. It constitutes a research technique with methodological rigor, judicious and conscientious, which increases the credibility and depth of conclusions that can contribute to reflection on the conduct of future studies, thus also contributing to decision-making that seeks to improve recent evidence <sup>9</sup>.

In the present study, we chose to search databases with wide scientific dissemination in the national and international environment, using the Virtual Health Library (VHL), the United State National Library of Medicine (PubMed) and the CAPES Journals portal for greater reach. In the digital search for scientific articles indexed in the cited databases, the following Health Science Descriptors (DeCS) and Medical Subject Headings (Mesh) were used: Pediatric nursing / Pediatric Nursing, Games and toys / Games and Toys and Health Care nursing / Nursing care, combined by the Boolean operator "AND".

**Chart 1** - Database search strategy.

Database	Search Strategy
BVS - (DECS)	tw:((tw:(enfermagem pediátrica)) AND (tw:(jogos e brinquedos)) AND (tw:(assistência de enfermagem))) AND ( fulltext:"1") AND la:("pt" OR "en")) AND (year_cluster:[2000 TO 2019])
Periodicals CAPES - (DECS)	(Pediatric nursing) AND (Games and toys) AND (Nursing care)
PubMed - (Mesh)	((("paediatric nursing"[All Fields] OR "pediatric nursing"[MeSH Terms] OR ("pediatric"[All Fields] AND "nursing"[All Fields]) OR "pediatric nursing"[All Fields]) AND (("Games (Basel)"[Journal] OR "games"[All Fields]) AND ("play and playthings"[MeSH Terms] OR ("play"[All Fields] AND "playthings"[All Fields]) OR "play and playthings"[All Fields] OR "toys"[All Fields]))) AND ("nursing"[Subheading] OR "nursing"[All Fields] OR ("nursing"[All Fields] AND "care"[All Fields]) OR "nursing care"[All Fields] OR "nursing care"[MeSH Terms] OR ("nursing"[All Fields] AND "care"[All Fields])) AND ("loattrfree full text"[sb] AND ("2000/01/01"[PDAT] : "2019/12/31"[PDAT]))

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Data collection was carried out in September 2019. The language (texts published in Portuguese and English), publication period (between 2000 and 2019) and its free full availability were applied as filters within the databases (fully available). After selecting titles and abstracts, studies were included that will answer and meet the research aim and literature reviews, dissertations, theses and editorials were excluded.

After the complete reading of the article, a final sample of studies was then selected. Informations were also extracted for the composition of the synoptic table, and the articles were then presented by means of the following variables: title, year of publication, periodical of publication, level of evidence according to the Grade method, aim, method, focus of the therapeutic toy. The studies were also categorized and presented by central themes: ludotherapy, the importance of playing, humanization in nursing care, the benefits of using these toys and the difficulties of implementing the therapeutic toy.

## Results and Discussion

When associating the descriptors, 126 texts were found in the VHL, none in PubMed and 21 in the Capes Periodicals. After applying the eligibility criteria, three remained from the VHL and 17 from the Capes Periodicals. At first, these studies were analyzed in terms of title and summary, two studies from the VHL and six from the Capes Periodicals being evaluated. In the comparison of the results found in the searches between the databases, of the total of eight articles, none was repeated, thus leaving eight publications selected for full reading of the texts. And later, when analyzed as to their content in full, the eight studies were included and are presented in the table below.

There is a predominance of studies with a qualitative approach ( $n = 6$ ), in national journals ( $n = 8$ ), with a very low level of evidence ( $n = 8$ ) and in nursing journals ( $n = 7$ ).

**Table 2** - Summary table of the final sample according to title, year of publication, database, publication period, level of evidence according to the Grade method, method and the approach of therapeutic play. Brasília - DF, 2020.

Title	Year	Database	Periodicals	Evidence	Method	Toy approach
Protocol for the preparation of pre-school children for venipuncture using therapeutic toys	2001	Capes Periodicals	Revista Latino Americana de Enfermagem	Very low	Descriptive exploratory study with a Qualitative approach.	Venipuncture
Recreation for children in the waiting room of a children's clinic	2006	Capes Periodicals	REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE ENFERMAGEM (REBEn)	Very low	Descriptive study with Qualitative approach.	Children's outpatient waiting room

Playing in the waiting room of a Children's Clinic: the view of health professionals	2011	Capes Periodicals	Revista da Escola de Enfermagem USP	Very low	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach.	Children's outpatient waiting room
Routine use of therapeutic toys in the care of hospitalized children: nurse's perception	2012	Capes Periodicals	ACTA PAULISTA DE ENFERMAGEM	Very low	Descriptive - exploratory study with a quantitative approach	Hospital geral - General Hospital
Play as a resource for pediatric nursing care in venipuncture	2012	Capes Periodicals	Revista da Rede de Enfermagem do Nordeste	Very low	Descriptive - exploratory research, with a qualitative approach	Venipuncture
Disclosures by preschool children with chronic diseases undergoing outpatient treatment	2014	VHL	ACTA PAULISTA DE ENFERMAGEM	Very low	Qualitative research, guided by the references of Symbolic Interactionism and Bardin's thematic content analysis	Outpatient care
Therapeutic toy in venipuncture procedure: strategy to reduce behavioral changes	2016	Capes Periodicals	Revista CUIDARTE	Very low	Exploratory analytical research with a quantitative approach	Venipuncture
Children in outpatient follow-up: perspectives of care evidenced by interview with puppet	2019	VHL	Revista GAÚCHA DE ENFERMAGEM	Very low	Exploratory study with a generic qualitative approach	Outpatient care

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

## **Ludotherapy**

Ludotherapy is a psychotherapeutic technique with a child approach that is based on the fact that playing is a natural means of self-expression of the child. It is applied in health services to children with emotional, neurotic or psychotic disorders. Thus operationalized in sessions and can be coordinated by a psychologist, psychiatrist or by a nurse in any location that is prudent to do so. The main aim is to enable the child to understand their own feelings and behavior.<sup>10</sup>

The professional who accompanies this child must assess verbal and non-verbal manifestations, as well as clarify them. These sessions can last for an hour and when necessary can last for many months. One of the pre-established fundamentals of ludotherapy is the Therapeutic Toy, which are determined as a structured game that acts efficiently to reduce the adverse effects of children's hospitalization.<sup>10-11</sup>

The most used therapeutic toy is the instructional one, which aims to instruct the child in the procedures that will be performed with him, thus contributing to the understanding and collaboration with health professionals. It is especially used when the child refuses to perform the procedure, with feelings of tension and / or anxiety being notable.<sup>11-12</sup>

Although the therapeutic toy is based on ludotherapy, it is suitable and suitable for any and all children who are in atypical situations that are considered threatening or very different from their daily routine. It is a practice that can be used in any environment and by different professionals, aiming to assimilate the feelings and needs of these children.<sup>13-14</sup>

By using playfulness, the professional manages to reach the child, creating a satisfactory relationship between child-professional, it is possible to make playing a place of affection and emotion. By using this tool, the environment can be modified, facilitating care and alleviating the suffering of the companion, who in most cases is the mother. Thus it is possible to reduce the stress and anxiety of this companion by making the companion relax and positively assist in the treatment of the child.<sup>12-14</sup>

## **The importance of playing**

Playing is an essential practice in children's lives and it is essential for emotional, motor, social and mental development. It is the way in which the children can express their feelings and communicate with the environment in which they find themselves. It is by playing that they express the experiences, their dreams and desires.<sup>10-13</sup>

A game transforms the hospital into a relaxed and pleasant environment, making it easier to overcome constraints and changing an image that the hospital is just a place of suffering, fear and pain, certainly influencing physical and emotional recovery, accelerating rehabilitation.<sup>13-15</sup>

The toy has an eventually therapeutic performance in the hospital environment, which may reduce the rejection of treatment and make the child more cooperative. When they are playing they are distracted and seem to forget the environment they are in. Actions related to playing / toy are activities that recognize the process of child development and the child's well-being.<sup>14-13</sup>

Child development is associated with playing, especially because this practice reveals itself as a child's own language. Playing teaches the children how to behave within their environment, interact with situations and adjust to the demands imposed by society, so playing, the children can better respond to any situations experienced in the hospital environment determined by the waiting time for care, hospitalizations, venipuncture and hospital care routines.<sup>16-15</sup>

Playing is an opportunity to strengthen empathy between the child and the nurse, creating a more appropriate way for the professional to approach the child without trauma and increasing the chances of accepting the treatment. Playing or toy are proposed as an intervention in pediatric nursing, in any situation between the child's health or illness in a hospital setting. This procedure helps the quality of care to be offered and also reflects positively on the companion.<sup>14-16</sup>

### **Humanization in nursing care**

For humanized care, it is necessary first to add learning and awareness opportunities in education, in health courses about the child as a person and citizen, then at home or in health services, children's complaints must be considered so that it can be direct care interventions.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, atraumatic assistance is called care without trauma, which is an ideology that implies the use of actions that exclude or reduce the physical and psychological discomfort experienced by children and their families. This assistance is in accordance with what is recommended by the National Humanization Policy of the Ministry of Health.<sup>13-16</sup>

In view of this, a technique that becomes possible within a more humanized hospital environment is the use of therapeutic toys, removing the stereotypes of anxiety, pain, crying and fear existing in the children's routine in the hospital.<sup>13-16</sup>

Currently in health care, individual, clinical and curative care prevails, with sophisticated technologies, this form of care has been unsatisfactory and has undergone changes, especially after the construction of the National Humanization Policy. To apply humanized assistance, it is not enough to just invest in technological resources or equipment, the service is more effective when the child is heard, welcomed and respected by the entire team.<sup>14</sup>

It is not just about giving up technological and scientific innovations, but about uniting human and ethical values in order to respect and cherish everyone involved in the hospitalization process. To humanize child care, it is necessary to reduce the impacts of hospitalization and outpatient care, helping them to overcome the impasses caused by the disease.<sup>15</sup>

### **Benefits of implementing therapeutic play**

The therapeutic toy allows the children in the hospital environment the opportunity to restructure their lives, their experiences, being able to reduce anxiety and being used to help to identify their feelings, absorb new situations, assimilating what goes on in the hospital and unraveling misconceptions and perceptions of care practices.<sup>10</sup>

One of the cited advantages most expressed by the health team was the help that the toy provides for coping with new situations, contributing to the preparation of procedures and reducing the stress caused by hospitalization. The child begins to accept better the treatment proposed, using the toy it is possible to have even the reduction of a probable pain.<sup>13-15</sup>

Another benefit that is observed is the possibility for the nurse to understand the needs and emotions of the child, helping them to understand what is happening around them. It is also a benefit of the application of this toy for the professional who applies it, who feels fulfilled in professional and personal life, gratified for witnessing the positive effects, which leads the professional to recognize the toy as one of the important nursing intervention tools.<sup>13</sup>

### **Difficulties in implementing therapeutic toys**

It is currently possible to verify that the specialized literature on this topic is insufficient, this is one of the difficulties faced in the implementation of toys in pediatric care. Another point observed is that when an attempt is made to include the toy, children and companions are distracted by it and when the professional reaches this patient to perform the procedure, they need to make a greater effort to get the child's attention and of your companion, this way it is risky diverting activities from institutional routines, delaying team work.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the great commitment of children to toys can prevent professionals from interrupting this game in order to be attended by the doctor or nurse, in which case the care can be done with the child's dissatisfaction.<sup>15-18</sup>

Two other difficulties that were imposed and that stood out in the literature are the lack of time of the team professionals due to the great demand for service and the lack of physical structure, there is no specific place where such activity can be developed without interference in the activity performed.<sup>13,15-16</sup>

In contradiction to holistic care, it is still possible to observe attitudes such as: interventions aimed only at drug treatment, ignorance or unpreparedness in relation to therapeutic play, concern about other activities that have to be developed in the unit for not having enough employees. This interrupts the search for the professional who meets the child for another activity in the hospital, thus interrupting the games that were being played.<sup>13-15</sup>

The study is limited due to the small number of articles published regarding the relationship of therapeutic play with nursing practice, making the technique still not widespread, as it does not contain standards that can be perpetuated for implementation in hospital spaces.

### **Conclusion**

The development of this study made it possible to elucidate the importance of therapeutic toys in children's hospitalization, as well as the relevance of playing as a method of nursing intervention, of humanization, its benefits and difficulties.



It is suggested that the nursing team try to associate therapeutic toy in the daily routine of treating children, as it is a tool that allows use in all phases of the nursing care process. Hospital unit managers are expected to provide an adequate space for such action.

It is important that education on the subject is carried out on a continuous basis and soon it is essential to emphasize the advantages of this device in health institutions, reinforcing playing as indispensable in the development of children. It is a form of respect and makes it heard and well interpreted.

It is also recommended that the literature on the subject is increasingly inserted into the continuing education of professionals working in the area and that the topic can also be developed from studies during the training process of new nurses.

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**Correspondent Author**

Iel Marciano de Moraes Filho  
Universidade Paulista, Nursing Departament.  
Square 913, Block B. ZIP: 70390-130. Asa Sul. Brasília,  
Federal District, Brazil.  
[ielfilho@yahoo.com.br](mailto:ielfilho@yahoo.com.br)