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# Instruments used for psychological assessment of hospitalized children

Instrumentos utilizados para la evaluación psicológica de niños hospitalizados

Instrumentos utilizados para avaliação psicológica de crianças hospitalizadas

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** learn which instruments are applied for the psychological evaluation of hospitalized children. **Method:** bibliographic and qualitative research of literature review type. The articles used were published from 2007 to 2017, in the CAPES, Web of Science and PsycNet databases, with the descriptors in Portuguese and English: Psychodiagnostic, Child and Hospital; Psychodiagnostic, Child and Hospital, and Psychological Assessment, Child and Hospital; Psychological Assessment, Child and Hospital. **Results:** 11 articles were selected in this review. It was observed the production of studies based mainly on semi-structured interviews and the publications were concentrated in 2007 and presented in the CAPES database. The focus of the research was to improve the quality of care provided. No article written by Psychologist was found. **Conclusion:** it is considered important to produce knowledge in this area, despite the limited publication of studies, especially those produced by psychologists, which may limit the deepening of discussions.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Psychodiagnostic; Child; Hospital.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Conocer qué instrumentos son utilizados para la evaluación psicológica de niños hospitalizados. **Método:** investigación bibliográfica cualitativa de tipo revisión de literatura. Los artículos utilizados fueron publicados en el período de 2007 a 2017, en las bases datos CAPES, Web of Science e Psycnet con los descriptores em português y inglês. Psicodiagnóstico, niños y hospital. Assessment Psychological, Child and Hospital. **Resultados:** fueron seleccionados en esta revisión 11 artículos. Se observo la producción de estúdios basados principalmente em entrevistas semiestructurados y las publicaciones se concentraron em el año de 2007 y representadas en la base de datos CAPES. El centro de atención de las investigaciones fue de mejorar la cualidad del atendimento despedido. No fue encontrado, ninguno artículo escrito por Psicólogos. **Conclusión:** se considera inportante la producción de conocimientos em esta área pese de escasos a publicación de estúdios, especialmente aquellos producidos por psicólogos, que puede limitar la profundización de los debates.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Psicodiagnóstico; Niño; Hospital.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** conhecer quais instrumentos são utilizados para a avaliação psicológica de crianças hospitalizadas. **Método:** pesquisa bibliográfica, qualitativa, do tipo revisão de literatura. Os artigos utilizados foram publicados no período de 2007 a 2017, nas bases de dados CAPES, Web of Science e PsycNet, com os descritores em português e inglês: Psicodiagnóstico, Criança e Hospital; Psychodiagnostic, Child and Hospital, e Avaliação Psicológica, Criança e Hospital; Assessment Psychological, Child and Hospital. **Resultados:** foram selecionados nesta revisão 11 artigos. Observou-se a produção de estudos baseados principalmente em entrevistas semiestruturadas e as publicações concentraram-se no ano de 2007 e apresentadas na base de dados CAPES. O foco das pesquisas foi de melhorar a qualidade do atendimento dispensado. Não foi encontrado nenhum artigo escrito por Psicólogo. **Conclusão:** considera-se importante a produção de conhecimento nesta área, apesar de escassa a publicação de estudos, especialmente aqueles produzidos por psicólogos, o que pode limitar o aprofundamento das discussões.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Psicodiagnóstico; Criança; Hospital.

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## INTRODUCTION

Psychological assessment is one of the practices that most contributed to the development of psychology science. In Brazil, starting in 2012 with the thematic year of psychological assessment proposed by the Federal Council of Psychology (CFP), psychological assessment as a practice restricted to psychology professionals, has undergone significant advances and transformations.<sup>1,2</sup>

It is referred to in the clinical and health areas as a strategy adopted by professionals, aiming to carry out a study of individual characteristics, such as cognition, skills and personality. It is understood as a process in which a set of assessment methods, techniques and strategies is adopted aiming at the integration and understanding of information from different sources that enable decision making.<sup>3,2</sup>

Specifically in the health area, assessment is often used in the context of psychodiagnosis with children, which can be understood as a form of psychological assessment.<sup>4,3</sup> Considering that psychological assessment instruments differ from a broad set of attributes, it is essential to identify which instruments are most used in psychological assessment in the hospital context.

Assessing the psychological phenomena present during the hospitalization of children suggests two aspects: the first related to the management of anxiety and pain resulting from interventions during hospitalization.<sup>5</sup> The second is related to the promotion of well-being through the development of children's skills in coping with the environmental changes suffered during hospitalization.<sup>6</sup> The disease, although it represents a transient state, affects the individual as a whole and is felt in a unique way.

The concern about the psychological state of hospitalized children arose around 1940 in the United States, associated with the development of medical practice<sup>7</sup>. In 1989 the United Nations General Assembly (UN) signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child which includes the right to health care.<sup>8</sup> In Brazil, law No. 8069, which regulates the Statute of Children and Adolescents, provides and provides for the admission of children, as a subject of law, ensuring their wide participation in the outcome of their treatment.<sup>9</sup>

Children are impacted by both illness and hospitalization in their care routines.<sup>10</sup> The professional who works in this area must be prepared to use the psychological assessment instruments in order to know to intervene. The hospital environment has characteristics that must be considered in the systematization of the psychologist's work. The records of observations, the application of scales and experimentation have become practices present in the daily lives of professionals.<sup>10</sup> The professional who works in this area must be prepared to use the psychological assessment instruments in order to know to intervene. The hospital environment has characteristics that must be considered in the systematization of the psychologist's work. The records of observations, the application of scales and experimentation have become practices present in the daily lives of professionals.

Staying in the hospital in the early stages of development affects the child's behavioral, emotional, affective and relational aspects.<sup>11</sup> The child has his own physical, psychological and social characteristics, which must be identified and directed to optimize his well-being during the hospitalization period. The child's

adaptation in the context of hospitalization includes their points of view, even if they are rarely sought or recognized in the context of health.<sup>12-11</sup>

Factors related to pain, fear and anxiety are reported in the literature on the topic. Such emotional factors can contribute to the presence of negative emotional reactions during hospitalization.<sup>5</sup> Research also suggests that health professionals should be trained to identify the needs of the pediatric patient in the hospital, including cultural differences.<sup>12</sup> The assistance team plays a fundamental role in establishing clear and efficient communication. The child shows his "authenticity and sensitivity" by seeking support from the team during the procedures given.<sup>13</sup>

In order to verify, according to the published research, which instruments are being used for the psychological assessment of children in the context of hospitalization, a systematic literature review was carried out.

## METHOD

This is a bibliographic, qualitative, systematic review of the literature. For studies, in May 2017, articles published from 2007 to 2017 and updated in December 2020 were selected. The scientific production published in the CAPES databases, Web of Science; PsycNet, using the following descriptors in Portuguese and English: Psychodiagnosis, child and hospital. The research with the second set of descriptors was carried out in the same databases: psychological assessment, child and hospital.

As inclusion criteria were considered the articles made available in full, in Portuguese, English and Spanish, that researched children in the context of hos-

pitalization. As an exclusion criterion, psychological assessment was adopted with children over 12 years old; psychological assessment with parents and family.

175 articles with the first set of descriptors and 223 with the second set were selected. From the reading of the abstracts, considering the exclusion criteria, 46 articles from the first and 06 articles from the second set of descriptors were selected. From reading the full articles, those that did not fit the research objectives were excluded, resulting in 11 articles to be used in this article.

With the update of the data, a search was made with the same terms, having returned 27 articles on the CAPES portal.

With the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, none of them was suitable for this research. No other articles were returned in the other databases. For the purposes of data treatment and analysis, a table was made with the insertion of data from articles considered eligible for analysis, according to the following categories: 1. Objectives; 2. Instruments used; 3. Authors' country; 4. Profession of the authors; 5. Year of publication; 6. Database.

## RESULTS

It is noteworthy here that most of the articles were found at CAPES, and the ma-

majority of those selected also come from this base. Of a total of 175, 149 were from CAPES, 44 from Web of Science and 10 from PsycNet. Of those selected for reading CAPES abstract 25, 1 from Web of Science and included, were 9, all from Capes.

With the second set of descriptors, similar proportions were maintained, of 223 selected articles, 218 were from CAPES and 5 from Web of Science. Of the six selected for reading the summary, all were from Capes and of these two were included. The idea is confirmed here that little has been done regarding psychological assessment within hospitals, or Psycho-diagnosis.

Table 1: Summary of the articles that make up the sample of the present study

Autor/Ano	Objetivo	Método	Instrumentos	País	Profissão	Base de dados
Ekra, 2012	Investigar as influências ambientais	Entrevista, observação	Entrevista, fotografia	Noruega	Enfermagem	CAPES
Wenns-trom, 2008	Investigar a descrição dos sintomas pós-operatório	Entrevista, observação	Wong-Baker (FACES: escala de dor)	Suécia	Enfermagem	CAPES
Pelander, 2007	Descrever a concepção de hospital ideal.	Entrevista, desenhos	Desenhos	Finlândia	Enfermagem	CAPES
Runeson, 2007	Investigar o nível de conhecimento do diagnóstico	Entrevista	Carta informativa, entrevista	Suécia	Enfermagem	CAPES
He, 2007	Revelar as percepções das crianças sobre o uso de métodos para o alívio da dor	Entrevista	Entrevista	China	Enfermagem	CAPES
Salmela, 2010	Descrever as estratégias de enfrentamento para os medos relacionados ao hospital	Entrevista	Entrevista	Finlândia	Profissionais da Saúde	CAPES
Pacciullo, 2014	Compreender as Estratégias de enfrentamento usadas por crianças com câncer em quimioterapia	Entrevista	Entrevista	Brasil	TO e Enfermagem	CAPES
Gabatz, 2007	Conhecer as percepções das crianças portadoras de FC sobre as hospitalizações.	Entrevista	Entrevista	Brasil	Enfermagem	CAPES
Li, 2007	Desenvolver a versão chinesa da Escala de Ansiedade do Estado para Crianças (CSAS-C)	Teste com CSAS-C	CSAS-C	China	Enfermagem	CAPES
Li, 2008	Analisar a eficácia do uso do jogo terapêutico na preparação de crianças para cirurgia	Uso de brinquedos instrucionais	CSA-C e PPSQ	China	Enfermagem	CAPES
Kiche, 2009	Uso do BTI no preparo da criança durante o curativo	Uso de BTI	BTI	Brasil	Enfermagem	CAPES

Source: Data obtained through research in 2017.

Regarding the evaluation method, the majority, 42%, use semi-structured interviews, with rare cases of using standardized tests. Even when used, they are restricted to the area of Psychology that are being used by professionals from other areas, especially nursing.

One third of the studies come from Brazilian publications, followed by China and European countries. It was found that most studies are performed by nursing professionals, and none of them are produced by psychologists. This data is relevant, as it is a psychological assessment that is being studied by other professionals.

With respect to the year of publication, 2007 stands out with 4 articles, the others being distributed in approximate quantities in other years. Regarding *Qualis dos Periódicos*, eight of them have an A-1 rating in the nursing area, one of them has an A-2 rating in the psychology area and only one does not have this evaluation.

## DISCUSSION

The psychological assessment remains a topic of interest and of continuous development. In the hospital context, it is used as a process of building knowledge about behaviors and emotional responses of hospitalized children and as an important resource in promoting well-being.<sup>1-6-4</sup>

Instruments used: the data found in the research confirm that psychological assessment is a necessary practice in the hospital context. However, it appears that the scientific communication on this theme results from research carried out by health professionals inserted in multi-professional assistance, showing the inexpressive participation of psychologists in these publications.<sup>15-16-17-18</sup>

In the researches reported, semi-structured interviews and scales for assessing pain and anxiety stand out, which are not for private use by the psychologist.<sup>17-19-16</sup> Although they describe the psychological processes and

**Therapeutic action of the instruments used: there is an effort by health professionals to minimize the impact of stress on children, using well-being promotion strategies even before hospitalization. The observations of family and assistant professionals were also considered as indicators of measurement of the therapeutic effects of the use of instruments, specifically associated with the responses of pain and anxiety by children.**

evaluate psycho-emotional behaviors and responses, no study was identified on the psychometric properties of the tests used, which would restrict the use by non-psychologist professionals. The FLACC scale (Face, Legs, Activity, Cry, Consolability) to measure the has been widely used mainly with children aged up to 7 years.<sup>23, 24</sup> Among these publications, the study on the validity of the Chinese version of the State Anxiety Scale for Children (CSAS-C) stands out.<sup>18</sup>

Therapeutic action of the instruments used: there is an effort by health professionals to minimize the impact of stress on children, using well-being promotion strategies even before hospitalization.<sup>12-10</sup> The observations of family and assistant professionals were also considered as indicators of measurement of the therapeutic effects of the use of instruments, specifically associated with the responses of pain and anxiety by children.<sup>23, 24</sup>

Research in Brazil: Brazilian researchers have attached importance to the use of instructional therapeutic toys and semi-structured interviews as mediators in preparing the child for procedures during hospitalization.<sup>11-14-20-21</sup> 2007 stands out, with 5 articles. Such studies emphasize the assessment of children's perception of the ideal hospital environment and the strategies adopted in adapting to pre and post surgical procedures.<sup>17-18-19-21-22</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This research showed the relevance of psychological assessment in the hospital context, understood as an interventionist and facilitating strategy for communication between patients, health professionals and family members. However, the scarce publication of research conducted with the purpose of describing and quantifying psychological constructs validated in this context, limited the depth of the discussion. It is suggested a new research directed to the professionals who work in this area with the objective of

knowing the practices developed, and thus giving visibility to the techniques adopted. We also believe that the psychologist's performance in the hospital is a developing field and the practice of psychological assessment for the psychologists who work there, lacks theoretical and methodological designs. It is also

## It is also worth noting that the psychologist, as a legacy of his education

worth noting that the psychologist, as a legacy of his education, emphasizes the importance of construction, of the development of instruments, and their application in the clinic, while professionals who work in other areas seek the applicability of these instruments as guides of their practice. ■

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