

## Supporting Families and Children in Hospitals

Dr. Ahsan Nazeer  
Division Chief, Child and Adolescent  
Psychiatry

Dr. Khalid Al-Ansari  
Chair, Emergency Department

## Topics

- Psychosocial aspect of patient care
- Child Life department

# Patients' Journeys

- We see patients at their worst and at their best
- From emergency care to diagnosis, through treatment, to the long term care
- It is a long journey which is shared between patient and health care practitioner
- Chronic illnesses
  - prolonged in duration
  - does not often resolve spontaneously
  - rarely cured completely

## Children and Youth

- Children with chronic illnesses are at risk of developing mental health problems
  - Physical and lifestyle modifications
  - Restricted participation in sports and school activities
- These factors may limit spontaneity, create challenges for social relationships, and generate concerns about the future

## Parents and Siblings

- Increased levels of stress due to intensified demands of their care and support role
- Financial pressures
- Strains on their marriages and relationships
  - Loss of child-divorce
- Siblings are at increased risk of:
  - Anxiety and intense emotions
  - Experience confusion and difficulty communicating about the illness
  - May feel overlooked
  - And can experience negative changes to family and social functioning as a result of their sibling's illness

# Resiliency

- Some families are able to positively manage the impacts of the illness on their lives to
  - Build stronger relationships
  - Learn coping skills
  - Draw on their strengths
  - Refocusing priorities
  - Recognizing opportunities and adapting to the situation so they achieve a sense of functioning just as well as 'healthy' families
  - Dynamic process-work through their emotions and feelings

“I said: what about my eyes?  
He said: Keep them on the road.

I said: What about my passion?  
He said: Keep it burning.

I said: What about my heart?  
He said: Tell me what you hold inside it?

I said: Pain and sorrow.  
He said: Stay with it. The wound is the place where the Light enters you.”

# Basic Needs of the Families

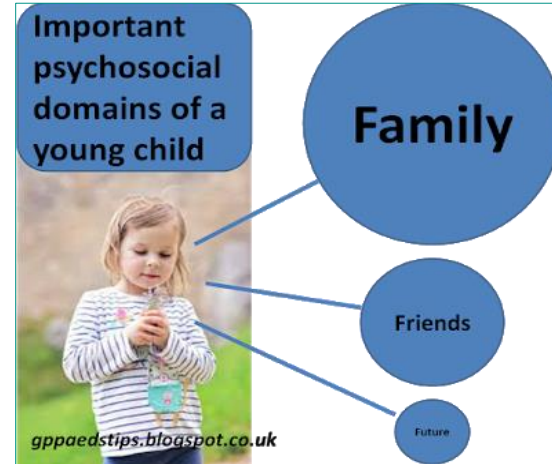
- The need for information
- The need for reassurance and support
- The need to be near the patient



- Patients consistently report informational and emotional needs that are unmet in their journeys (Sussman and Baldwin 2010)
  - The question then is how effectively do we address psychosocial care with our patients?
  - There are two important issues in the delivery of psychosocial care (Muriel et al 2009)
    - Recognition of distress
    - and the knowledge of available mental health resources

# What is Psychosocial Care?

- Part of a holistic patient perspective
- Psychosocial care involves the culturally sensitive provision of psychological, social and spiritual care/support
- Goal is to work with the children and families to reduce stress and support them through their journeys



# Why provision of Psychosocial Care is Important?

- The provision of good psychosocial care has been shown to be beneficial for patients by reducing both psychological distress and physical symptoms
  - Increasing quality of life and resiliency
  - Enhancing coping and reducing levels of discomfort with a consequent reduction on demands for hospital resources  
(Ellis et al 2006; Carlson and Bultz 2003)

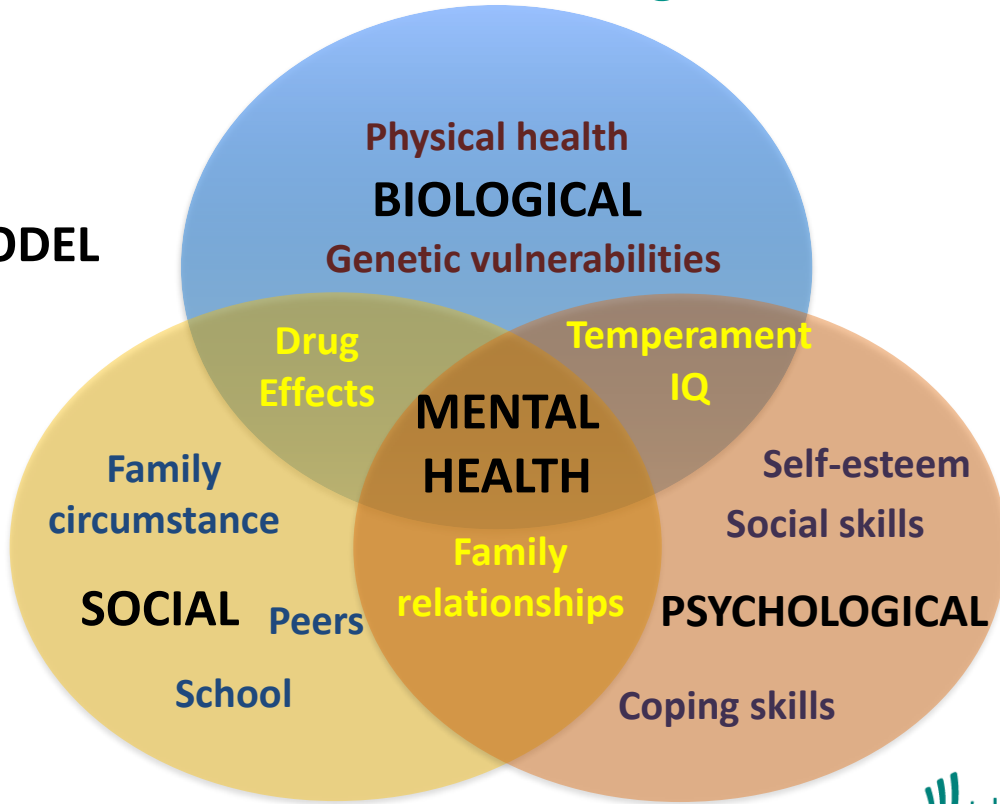
# Pediatric Psychosocial Care Standards

- Systematic assessment
  - Youth and their family members for psychosocial health care needs at the time of admission
- Provide psychoeducation, information, and anticipatory guidance related to disease, treatment, acute and long-term effects, hospitalization, and procedures
- Yearly psychosocial screening for children with chronic illnesses
  - Educational and/or vocational progress
  - Social and relationship difficulties
  - Distress, anxiety, and depression

- Easy access to child and adolescent psychiatry
- Assessment of risk for financial hardship of the families
  - Single parent status, distance from treating center, anticipated long/intense treatment protocol, and parental employment status
  - Negative implications for quality of life
  - Parental emotional health
    - Parents and caregivers of children with chronic illnesses should have routine assessment of their mental health needs
    - Siblings of children with chronic illnesses should be provided with appropriate supportive services

# Psychosocial Care in Pediatric Health care settings

## THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF HEALTH



# Child Life Services in Health Care setting

- Department recognizes that illness, injury, and hospitalization are stressful events
- The department aims to provide expert interventions based in the modalities of therapeutic play, creative expression, and developmentally appropriate preparation and education
- Care is individualized, evidence-based, family-centered and culturally-sensitive, with the aim to promote positive coping and well-being.



## Child Life Services can help with...

- Chronic or long-term illness.
- New diagnosis
- Before, during and/or after procedures
- Extended length of stay; acute or chronic pain; frequent admissions
- Experiencing grief/loss; low social supports
- Those having difficulties coping and/or exhibiting concerning behaviors





# Child Life Services in Health Care setting

Additional Interventions provided by Child Life Services include:

- Explanation of medical procedures and education around illness processes.
- Play interventions to lessen fear and anxiety
  - Medical play opportunities to help give children a sense of mastery and control in a threatening environment
  - Developmental play opportunities to support typical cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development while hospitalized
- Teaching of relaxation and coping skills before
- Accompaniment to procedures as a non-medical support person to provide distraction and coping techniques

*thank you*