

# Hospital Classrooms

## A novel concept in the developing world

Sen S, Deshpande A, Gadgil P, Singhal T

Department of Paediatrics, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital & Research Centre, Mumbai, India

### BACKGROUND

- Education is a fundamental right of all children including those in a hospital.
- A hospital-based school is a child-centered service that **provides an educational environment tailored to the specific needs of sick children.**
- In majority of developed countries, hospital-based schools have existed for decades, with programs across levels from elementary to senior high schools.<sup>1</sup>The Hong Kong Red Cross Hospital School, was one among them established in 1954 and later expanded to 18 schools by 2011.<sup>1</sup>
- Schooling hospitalised children is **either non existent or remains a very low priority in developing countries including India.** A study showed that, Taiwan has only one hospital-based informal school and eight hospitals with rotating bedside teachers.<sup>2</sup>
- **We are , amongst the first in India to start a dedicated hospital schooling programme.**

### METHODS

- We started a day school in the play area for all our indoor patients as a **pilot project in January 2017.**
- Observations collected from Jan 2017 to Sept.2017.
- The school covers curriculum from **kindergarten to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in English and Hindi.**
- The utility was ascertained from a self made feed back questionnaire.

### OBJECTIVE

**To overview the concept and various aspects of providing educational services to the children during prolonged hospitalization .**



### OBSERVATIONS

- The **initial response was poor** with an attendance of **5.6%** in the initial 2 weeks, followed by an increase to **16%** over time.
- Age Group :**92%** children attending the classroom were between the age of **4 to 7** years and children above 12 years preferred not to do any academic work in the hospital.
- The main reasons for **reluctance** to attend school were:
  - a)**The child needs rest and needs to recover(71%)**
  - b) **Do not want the added burden of studies during illness(61%).**
- A verbal survey was conducted at the end of 6 months which initiative, revealed that **55% of the health care workers** in the hospital **were not aware of this initiative. Eightyfive % of parents were unaware** about such facilities provided by the hospital.
- **Among the 52 completed parent feedback forms:**
  - 52/52** parents reported that their children felt **happy** in the day school
  - 51/52** parents reported **satisfaction** with the education that their child received
  - 43/46** parents thought that the school will help their kids to **achieve his or her academic best, despite the medical odds**

### CONCLUSION

- **The learning opportunities for children with chronic illness are inadequate in India and scant educational resources are offered inside hospitals.**
- **For children undergoing treatment, school can offer a familiar and reassuring routine, as well as a feeling of being in step with their peers in the outside world.**
- **Till date hospital classroom initiative has helped us to identify 14 cases of learning disabilities.**
- **This concept needs to be popularised further specially in the developing world. We are trying our best with help of parental and staff awareness programmes, cut-outs, pamphlets.etc.**

Special Educator- **Priyanka Mehta** PG Diploma School Leadership and management, B.Ed Special Education, B.Ed General Education, B.Sc