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A LITTLE JOURNEY TO THE HOSPITAL BEFORE THE DAY OF SURGERY

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Background/Context

Pre-operative anxiety in children is not only a distressing emotional experience for the child and family but is also associated with several negative physiological outcomes. Audio-visual interventions, including delivery of educational preparation content pre-operatively, interactive games and guided relaxation have been shown to significantly reduce pre-operative anxiety in children (1).

Problem

Our hospital is a busy District General providing mostly day-case elective paediatric surgery for ASA 1-2 patients for which there is no formal pre-operative assessment process (except in ENT). A survey of parents attending with their child for elective surgery found that 71% of parents and 82% of children found that not knowing what to expect was the most challenging part of the day.

Strategy for change

We introduced the web-based programme 'Little Journey' to our hospital. The customisation portal allowed us to upload 360-degree images of the clinical areas the patients would encounter, information leaflets and key hospital information. Little Journey is available to patients and families via a downloadable app, which allows the user to 'explore' the clinical areas by manipulating the images. There are also sections on the app providing coaching for relaxation techniques and interactive games.

Marketing leaflets for the app were supplied to the surgical bookings administrative team to include with the appointment letter posted to patients. A version was also uploaded onto the Paediatrics page on our external website. The Play Therapist on the paediatric ward was recruited to display posters and give out leaflets to parents.

Measure of improvement

We are presently collecting feedback from families about Little Journey via a survey distributed post-operatively. So far, all the families that accessed Little Journey found it 'very useful'.

Lessons learnt

Overall, the introduction of the Little Journey app is felt to be a positive intervention by paediatric and anaesthetic colleagues. The biggest challenge to promoting the use of the Little Journey app in our paediatric population has been the dissemination of promotional materials. The most successful method was by having a link uploaded onto our hospital's webpage. The next step will

be to ensure more comprehensive dissemination of promotional materials and re-audit when the volume of elective work has increased.

Message for others

Web-based educational pre-operative preparation can be a useful resource for parents and children prior to attending routine surgery, particularly in the absence of any other provision for the preparation of the child prior to the date of surgery.

Reference

1. Agbayani C-JG, Fortier MA & Kain ZN. Non-pharmacological methods of reducing perioperative anxiety in children. *BJA Education* 2020; 20 (12): 424e430