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Parental role and involvement in decisions regarding children's healthcare in the hospital

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Statement of the Problem: Parents are important partners in the coproduction and implementation of their children's healthcare. In many Western countries parents have a legal right to be involved in their children's healthcare decisions. However, they are not involved in these decisions as much as they would prefer, and they seem to face a particularly vulnerable situation during their children's hospitalization. There is little research on parents' role and needs in terms of their involvement in decision-making about shaping their children's healthcare in the hospital. The aim of this study was to explore parents' experiences with the parental role and their involvement in shaping their child's healthcare in the hospital and to identify how health professionals can support parents and improve parental involvement.

Methodology: The study has an explorative descriptive qualitative design within a constructivist research paradigm. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 12 parents. Qualitative content analysis was performed.

Findings: The parents were highly concerned about their child's healthcare and had a demanding parental role during their child's hospitalization. Their ability to participate in decision-making regarding their child's healthcare seemed to be dependent on their health literacy and health professionals' facilitation of parental involvement. Individual tailored and respectful facilitation of parental involvement in decision-making regarding their child's healthcare by health professionals appeared to promote and enable parents' influence, control and ability to cope with the parental role during children's hospitalizations.

Conclusion & Significance: The health professionals have an essential role in facilitating parental involvement in decisions regarding children's healthcare and in improving parents' ability to cope with the parental role. The study includes the perspectives of parental involvement in decision-making, family-centered care and health promotion and thereby provides unique insight into the parental role during children's hospitalization.

Biography

Antje Aarthun is a PhD-candidate in Health and Medicine in Department of Health Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Stavanger in Norway. Her PhD-project is about parental involvement in decision making about children's healthcare in the hospital. In addition, she works in Department of Pediatrics at Stavanger University Hospital. She is a Special Physiotherapist in Pediatrics and has Master's degree in Health Sciences.

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