Pediatric Grand Rounds Will Resume in September

Child life in the Pediatric Procedure Area

*Child Life Specialists* work throughout the Children’s Hospital to ensure that pediatric patients and their families receive care that meets their emotional, psychosocial and developmental needs. While Child Life is very visible on the inpatient units, the playroom and the Emergency Department, we also serve patients and families tucked away on the 5th floor Pediatric Procedure Area. The Pediatric Procedure Area (PPA) is a very unique clinical setting to offer Child Life support, as multiple disciplines come together to serve a varied patient population. The nurses and doctors who serve this area are dedicated to meeting patient and families’ individual needs and are extremely receptive to working alongside Child Life to ensure families have a positive experience. Zeh Wellington, Interim Director for Pediatric Procedure Area, says “Lacey’s focus is on the child and what’s happening; she calms their fears while playing an essential role in the well-being of the child and their family during these often scary situations.”

In the PPA, five days a week, children may experience general anesthesia for a variety of procedures, receive infusions and other non-sedated procedures such as anal manometries and Urinary Video Dynamics. These procedures can be unfamiliar, uncomfortable and potentially scary to children and families. Child Life works its magic, providing play, crafts, and supportive measures during procedures. This “magic” results in less tears, more smiles and even requests to return. Patients that must come frequently can count on their favorite toys, games and movies being available to them. *Child Life Specialist Lacey Reeves* explains,” You can often see the anxiety and fear on children’s faces when they enter the unit. Facilitating play sessions with patients helps to normalize the environment and put patients (and parents) at ease. Offering preparation and establishing a coping plan with the patients’ input allows them to gain control over their experience. It is incredibly rewarding to support families through these challenging moments. Parents will express appreciation that their nervous child was able to “quickly acclimate to the environment through play and continue playing until falling asleep.”

Patients having general anesthesia are taught about what will happen, playing with medical dolls and actual medical equipment. The anesthesia mask can be decorated, scented and perhaps a song practiced to sing into it, as the child drifts off to sleep. Caregivers are offered the opportunity to accompany their child to the procedure room and stay with them as they receive anesthesia (Parent Presence Induction-PPI). Lacey says “I often notice visible relief in parents as I accompany a parent out of the procedure room. The opportunity to support their child until they are safely asleep provides great comfort to both patients and parents. The appreciation that parents express for this opportunity demonstrates the importance of involving families in care.”

Lacey ensures that her cabinets are stocked with patient favorites, toys and crafts. She knows how they cope with procedures and then puts individualized strategies into action. The results: less anticipatory anxiety, more cooperation and less need for sedation. Per Dr. Ricardo Arbizu M.D., Pediatric GI, “Having a child life specialist on board definitely makes a big difference on our patient’s experience when they come in for a procedure. Specifically, Lacey is an enormous help when we perform anorectal or esophageal manometries on our patients. She knows what the test consists of and she has a very fun way of explaining the process. In summary, MUSC Children’s Hospital has an amazing and dedicated Child Life specialist team!”