

Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress
An Amazing Vacation Experience and Not Only for Children
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Purpose:

About two million children (33% of the total population) live in Israel. Of these children, 13% suffer from chronic diseases that cause disability and 9% of them have severe disabilities that affect quality of life (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, 2017).

Most of the significant chronic diseases affecting children and adolescents are characterized by an acute stage at the diagnosis of the disease, followed by continuous physical and mental stress associated with prolonged therapy and challenging events over the years (McCarthy, 2015). Daily pressures reported include lack of study days, fear of failure to meet academic and social expectations, loss of ability to perform activities the child previously was able to, repeated hospital or clinic visits, and concerns about family members and friends (Compas, Jaser, Dunn, & Rodriguez, 2011; Douma, Scholten, Maurice-Stam, & Grootenhuis, 2018).

Methods:

Jordan River Village is a unique place and the only overnight camp in the Middle East for children coping with chronic diseases. The camp is one of 16 around the world belonging to the SeriousFun network founded by Paul Newman in 1988. The 245-acre village houses residential and vacation apartments for children and staff, a swimming pool, sports facilities, gymnasium, theater, library, arts and crafts center, a camping complex, extreme sports, and a medical center. Facilities and activities in the village are accessible to children with various physical disabilities and wheelchairs.

The activities and programs focus on the child rather than the illness. The goals are to improve the child's self-esteem and self-image and provide a safe, enjoyable, and unforgettable experience, just like any other child. The activities encourage support and mutual assistance and reinforce the feeling that the child is not alone. During all activities, emphasis is placed on achievement rather than competitiveness.

The resort offers these experiences at no cost to the child and his family. The village hosts children and youth aged 9-18 from all sectors of the State of Israel: secular, religious, and ultra-orthodox Jews, Druze, Circassians, Muslims, Bedouin, Christians, and children from the Palestinian Authority and Gaza. The common denominator is age and disease.

A special medical committee determines the children (based primarily on disease needs) and what criteria are accepted for each vacation.

Results:

The first vacation session in the village opened in August 2011. The village operates year round, with about 40 vacation sessions a year. Each class of 64 children is divided into groups of 16 children and 8 counselors, according to age. The village hosts about 1500 campers a year.

The counselors are young people serving their year of national service, and about 1,000 volunteers (nurses, doctors, and other staff), who do a wonderful job and give the children a lot of love. The village has an innovative and elaborate medical center, staffed at all times by doctors and nurses authorized to treat the children (the village team is reinforced by a professional volunteer staff). The volunteer nurses play an

independent and/or complementary role to the clinic staff. The volunteer activity increases professionalism, especially by providing support, friendship, and information (Mundle et al., 2012; Dalmida et al., 2016). The medical center takes care of all the vacationers' medical needs – both permanent and temporary. A pediatric nurses' team is responsible for distributing medications.

A nurse accompanies a group throughout the session and is the adult figure (in addition to the counselors) whom they can consult, share, and come to for a good word and hug. "Do you remember me from last year?" They often ask me, as a nurse, "Are you still with us this year?" During the vacation, the children turn to us with any health or emotional difficulties that arise and are given treatment and support. While talking about pain, it emerges that this is the first time they have slept away from their home and parents. They are a bit afraid. During the conversation, I respect the fear, appreciate their efforts, give them a hug, and help ease their fear. At breakfast the next day, I meet them happy and stronger, with a sense of self-competence.

Conclusion:

We witness the children's heightened self-esteem, an improved compliance with health care and its implications (Mundle, Naylor, & Buck, 2012), and an improved sense of well-being, reducing social isolation and exclusion (McCarthy, 2015), or as, for example, one of the children told us: "With children like me, I feel most free".

I started volunteering in 2012 and attend a five-day vacation session every summer.

Volunteering requires preparing for the vacation: a return to the clinical field of the session, drug treatments, and more (Dalmida et al., 2016; Gerber, 2016).

In my experience, nurses are motivated to return annually because of the different experience and opportunity to develop new skills, as well as promoting personal and social empowerment. More so, formation and creation of new relationships (Gerber, 2016). Volunteering has very positive health and wellbeing outcomes on the volunteers (Mundle et al., 2012). The atmosphere in the camp may be more relaxed than a clinical employment setting and the schedule more personalized (Gerber, 2016).

Personally, perhaps the most honest answer is that of the little girl in me who once again seeks a long, deep experience of pleasure, amusement, laughter, friendship – all the beautiful things of life. And the adult in me asks that all this will occur with a lot of compassion and meaning.

I believe a nurse/ clinical instructor can benefit from volunteering in the village by gaining specific perspectives on the nurse-child relationship, learning to focus on introspection and reflection, and experiencing informal communication with children with chronic diseases.

Title:

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Keywords:

camp, children with chronic disease and nurse volunteer

References:

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- Seminal Work

Abstract Summary:

The Jordan River Village is the only overnight camp in the Middle East for children with chronic illness. The camp is made possible by a network of volunteers, including doctors and nurses. In this poster, one nurse explains how both she and the children benefit from her volunteering.

Content Outline:

1. **Extent of the Issue - Children-** About two million children (33% of the total population) live in Israel. Of these children, 13% suffer from chronic diseases that cause disability and 9% of them have severe disabilities that affect quality of life (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, 2017).
2. **Children with Chronic Diseases** - Most of the significant chronic diseases affecting children and adolescents are characterized by an acute stage at the diagnosis of the disease, followed by continuous physical and mental stress associated with prolonged therapy and challenging events over the years (McCarthy, 2015).
3. **An example of Camp for Children with Chronic Diseases** - Jordan River Village is a unique place and the only overnight camp in the Middle East for children coping with chronic diseases. The camp is one of 16 around the world belonging to the SeriousFun network founded by Paul Newman in 1988. The 245-acre village houses residential and vacation apartments for children and staff, a swimming pool, sports facilities, gymnasium, theater, library, arts and crafts center, a camping complex, extreme sports,

and a medical center. Facilities and activities in the village are accessible to children with various physical disabilities and wheelchairs.

- The activities and programs focus on the child rather than the illness. The goals are to improve the child's self-esteem and self-image and provide a safe, enjoyable, and unforgettable experience, just like any other child. The activities encourage support and mutual assistance and reinforce the feeling that the child is not alone. During all activities, emphasis is placed on achievement rather than competitiveness.
- The resort offers these experiences at no cost to the child and his family. The village hosts children and youth aged 9-18 from all sectors of the State of Israel: secular, religious, and ultra-orthodox Jews, Druze, Circassians, Muslims, Bedouin, Christians, and children from the Palestinian Authority and Gaza. The common denominator is age and disease.
- **Camp Activities** - The first vacation session in the village opened in August 2011. The village operates year round, with about 40 vacation sessions a year. Each class of 64 children is divided into groups of 16 children and 8 counselors, according to age. The village hosts about 1500 campers a year.
- The counselors are young people serving their year of national service, and about 1,000 volunteers (nurses, doctors, and other staff), who do a wonderful job and give the children a lot of love. The village has an innovative and elaborate medical center, staffed at all times by doctors and nurses authorized to treat the children (the village team is reinforced by a professional volunteer staff). The volunteer nurses play an independent and/or complementary role to the clinic staff. The volunteer activity increases professionalism, especially by providing support, friendship, and information (Mundle et al., 2012; Dalmida et al., 2016). The medical center takes care of all the vacationers' medical needs – both permanent and temporary. A pediatric nurses' team is responsible for distributing medications.
- A nurse accompanies a group throughout the session and is the adult figure (in addition to the counselors) whom they can consult, share, and come to for a good word and hug. "Do you remember me from last year?" They often ask me, as a nurse, "Are you still with us this year?" During the vacation, the children turn to us with any health or emotional difficulties that arise and are given treatment and support. While talking about pain, it emerges that this is the first time they have slept away from their home and parents. They are a bit afraid. During the conversation, I respect the fear, appreciate their efforts, give them a hug, and help ease their fear. At breakfast the next day, I meet them happy and stronger, with a sense of self-competence.
- 4. **Child Outcomes** - We witness the children's heightened self-esteem, an improved compliance with health care and its implications (Mundle, Naylor, & Buck, 2012), and an improved sense of well-being, reducing social isolation and exclusion (McCarthy, 2015), or as, for example, one of the children told us: "With children like me, I feel most free".
- 5. **Nurse Volunteer Outcomes** - In my experience, nurses are motivated to return annually because of the different experience and opportunity to develop new skills, as well as promoting personal and social empowerment. More so, formation and creation of new relationships (Gerber, 2016). Volunteering has very positive health and wellbeing outcomes on the volunteers (Mundle et al., 2012). The atmosphere in the camp may be more relaxed than a clinical employment setting and the schedule more personalized (Gerber, 2016).

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Author Summary: Work at Nursing School for 23 years. Main area of focus is instruction on care for children. Volunteering at the camp for children with chronic diseases 6 years 2012-present.