Methods

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Results

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Background and Aims

In our PICU, nurses have for several years been writing a personal diary for all children admitted for 3 days or more. The purpose of the diary is to help the children understand their recollections and experiences from the PICU stay and thereby support their coping.

Research involving adult ICU patients has explored patients experiences with diaries and the effect on psychological outcome, but no PICU studies have been reported on the subject.

Thus the aim of our study was to investigate how diaries are being used and to explore their role in coming to term with the PICU stay.

Methods

5 semi-structured interviews with children and their families, 4–6 months after discharge from PICU. The data was analyzed using the method of systematic textcondensation described by Kistin Malterud. During this analytic process the text is decontextualised into “units of meaning” from which themes and subthemes are identified.

Results

One family had not used the diary much and ascribed this to a short PICU stay. The remaining families all expressed positive opinions of the diary and saw it as one of several tools to help understand and make sense of their experiences from PICU.

Three main themes emerged from the analysis:

Value to the entire family.

Creating memories.

The importance of pictures.

Conclusions

Personal diaries are used in the families after discharge as support for both children and their relatives. They play an important role in making the PICU experience meaningful by providing explanations and coherence.