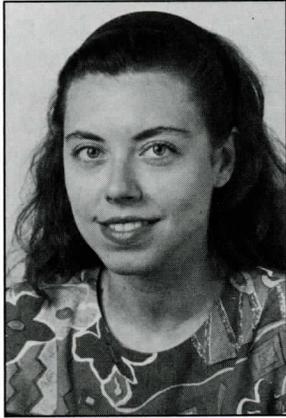


FAMILY CENTERED NURSING IN CHILD PSYCHIATRY



May Grillakis

If nursing goals set for children are to be met, they must involve the family unit. A child is fully understood only when viewed within the context of the whole family. Successful child health care rests on identification of family attitudes, resources, and needs.

The notion about the whole family being the patient cannot be overemphasized because it is central to the philosophy of care on our unit. Nursing the family

generally includes the entire family living in one household. In most instances, the family is seen together early in the exploratory phase. The family interaction patterns in the presence of an infant will often give valuable clues to the family relationships.

As a nurse, I am a member of a multidisciplinary team that develops treatment plans for children and their families who are experiencing various stresses. Our energies are directed toward observing the family system in action and abstracting from that observation



Child Psychiatry Unit

the repetitive patterns of interactions that support the problem behavior. With this information we implement strategies to help the family members manage their stresses in ways that do not precipitate problem behavior in their child. The family must be treated as a system.

Families have direct impact on the health potential of the child, influencing the child's health beliefs and attitudes, as well as increasing the likelihood of prescribed interventions being carried out. Teaching a child about health-promoting behaviors (e.g. self responsibility; regular balanced meals; age-appropriate amounts of rest and exercise; stress management; safe environment) is not effective unless the family shares the knowledge and supports the promoted behaviours. Only then can we attain our goals. ■

May Grillakis

DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY

- FAMILY -** "refers to all members of the household" (Wright & Leahey, 1984).
- FAMILY -** "any natural living group" (Allen, 1982).
- FAMILY -** "a primary social group consisting of parents and their offspring" (Collins Dictionary, 1982).



WHO IS YOUR FAMILY?