Learning and developing through play, rhymes and songs: experience of a child and adolescent psychiatry resident in a preschool classroom

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Introduction

Preschool period

The preschool period (ages 3–6) is a time of rapid developmental growth in a variety of important areas as children continue to negotiate and balance their reliance upon the primary caregiver with their desire for independence, often marked by their first venture into the world beyond their immediate family and community.

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Training in Portugal

In Portugal, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) is organized as an autonomous speciality (since 1959) with its specific training programme, rules and guidelines, as well as practice domain. The postgraduate training in CAP (since 1983) takes 5 years but its national programme does not include a specific period of contact with children with normative development in the community.

Objectives

To provide a brief overview of the previously mentioned internship at a public preschool in Northern Portugal; to assess by subjective methods the preschoolers’ development.

Methodology

Classroom observation report and commentary on child development as assessed by subjective methods (without developmental screening and assessment instruments).

Results

The class included 23 children between 3 and 4 years old (12 male and 11 female) but only 19 were observed during 40 hours in January 2019. While there were no salient and/or serious disparities between the preschoolers’ development, inter-individual differences were particularly noticeable, even as part of a normative development, based on the attainment of motor, cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, and behavioral milestones.

Conclusions

To the best of our knowledge, this was the first time that such type of internship was conducted in the context of the residency training in CAP in Portugal.

We believe that these experiences are not only a learning opportunity for residents but also a way to promote cooperation and proximity between mental health services and the community (schools).

References: