



## **Nurse as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in child guidance clinic: A short communication**

**<sup>1</sup>Dileep ET, <sup>2</sup>Pritika Rana and <sup>3</sup>Vijesh V Mohan**

<sup>1,3</sup> Nursing Tutor, Department of Child Health Nursing, ESIC College of Nursing, Indiranagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

<sup>2</sup> Nursing Tutor, Department of Mental Health Nursing, ESIC College of Nursing, Indiranagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

**Corresponding Author: Dileep ET**

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### **Abstract**

India has emerged as the world's most populous nation in 2023, with an estimated population of 1.428 billion people. 18.6 per cent of which are children aged 0-17 years. This is a period of tremendous physical development and growth, as well as rapid mental, emotional, and social transformation for them. A variety of factors, including family conflict, poverty, low academic achievement, and parental unemployment, rather than psychological and physiological health issues, influence the behavioral problems in children. A child guidance clinic is one of the medico-social amenities for the organized and scientific study and treatment of maladjustment in children. Pediatric nurses are those nurses who care for children belonging to all age groups in a variety of healthcare settings. Nurses play a central role in child guidance clinics, providing holistic care, guidance, and support to children and their families, with a focus on mental health, development, and safety.

**Keywords:** Children, behavioural problems, child guidance clinic, pediatric nurse

### **Introduction**

The State of the World's Children report by UNICEF for the year 2024 projects that India will have 350 million children by 2050, which would account for approximately 15% of the world's child population <sup>[1]</sup>. India has emerged as the world's most populous nation in 2023, with an estimated population of 1.428 billion people. 18.6 per cent of which are children aged 0-17 years <sup>[2]</sup>. This is a period of tremendous physical development and growth, as well as rapid mental, emotional, and social transformation for them. The capacity to achieve and maintain optimal psychological functioning and well-being is key to child and adolescent mental health, and it is directly related to the level of competence achieved in psychological and social functioning.

It is evident from the research works that the behavioural and emotional problems of children and adolescents often cause distress to parents, teachers, medical professionals, and society at large <sup>[3]</sup>. Studies revealed the prevalence rates of behavioral problems to be around 12.5% in children up to 16 years of age, and the rate of behavioral problems among 4-11-year-olds was found to be 6.3% <sup>[4]</sup>. A variety of factors, including family conflict, poverty, low academic achievement, and parental unemployment, rather than psychological and physiological health issues, influence the behavioral problems in children. As a part of a multi-disciplinary team in a health care setting, a nurse plays a pivotal role in identifying behavioural problems and maladjustments in the pediatric population.

### **Child Guidance Clinic (CGC)**

A child guidance clinic is one of the medico-social amenities for the organized and scientific study and treatment of maladjustment in children <sup>[5]</sup>. The concept of child guidance clinics in the early period addressing children's mental health issues. These clinics were established in urban areas, aiming to provide assessment, treatment, and support services for children and families, and later expanded their services to meet the growing demand for children's mental health support <sup>[6]</sup>.

Child guidance was started in the United States as a progressive reform with a goal of prevention, by identifying the early stages of problems in children, such as juvenile delinquency and mental illness. Over the years, the goal of prevention changed into the form of treating mild behavior and emotional problems in children. In 1922, the child guidance movement began as part of a program sponsored by a private foundation, the Commonwealth Fund's Program for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. The movement established community facilities, called child guidance clinics, for treating so-called maladjusted children, school-aged children of normal intelligence exhibiting slight behavior or psychological problems <sup>[7]</sup>.

### **Child Guidance Clinic in India**

In 1937, the Child Guidance Clinic (CGC), the first of its kind in India, was started in the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), previously known as Sir Dorabji Tata

Graduate School of Social Work, with the efforts of Dr. Clifford Manshardt, the first Director of the Institute. It was established to fulfil the clinical and educational functions. Later in 1980, the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) established the Child Guidance Centre to comprehensively cover the assessment, intervention, and rehabilitation of children with mental health problems. The centre delivers these services through a multi-disciplinary team and later opened three more CGCs at Lucknow, Guwahati, and Bengaluru<sup>[7]</sup>. In 1964, under Dr. Satyanand, the Department of Psychiatry at AIIMS, New Delhi, established the Child Guidance Clinic (CGC). Previously, it was part of the Department of Pediatrics, and it was Delhi's first such kind of clinic in a general hospital<sup>[8]</sup>.

### Objectives of CGC

For children with difficulties, CGC provides professional assessment services, focus on the children between 6 to 14 years of age with challenges in learning and behaviour. CGC extends its service through guidance and counseling services to children and parents. Children with suspected developmental delay also get services from CGC irrespective of age. Children who require specialized services and help are ensured by proper and timely referral to such institutions.

### Services available at CGC

Children tend to have an overlap of developmental, neurological, academic and emotional disorders in same child at same time. At each stage of development, children may be affected with varying degrees of problems. This can be exhibited as an aggressive, extroverted, misbehaving child, to the internal psychological and emotional states of the child. A recent study shows that some of the reasons for pediatric referrals to the CGC include irritability, restlessness, aggressive behavior, self-harm attempts, sadness, and poor scholastic performance<sup>[9]</sup>. Many difficulties in children may be just variations from the normal, even so professional evaluation is recommended.

### Professionals in CGC

A team of professionals and specialists from all related fields is required to assess and manage children with difficulties. Such a team includes clinical and educational psychologists, a language pathologist, speech therapist, pediatric nurse, social worker, special educator, counsellor for treatment and appropriate guidance to parents.

### Nurse's role in CGC

Nurses play a central role in child guidance clinics, providing holistic care, guidance, and support to children and their families, with a focus on mental health, development, and safety.<sup>9</sup> Pediatric nurses are those nurses who possess additional qualifications in pediatric or child health nursing and care for children belonging to all age groups in a variety of healthcare settings. They possess ample knowledge about growth and development, as they are mainly involved in the all-around development of the child<sup>[8]</sup>.

The role of a Nurse in a child guidance clinic based on Nursing Process approach.

### Nursing Assessment

Conducting comprehensive physical examinations, developmental screenings, and monitoring vital signs to identify potential medical issues impacting the child's behavior or mental health<sup>[10]</sup>. Some of the measures used during the assessment of children in CGC are developmental history, observations of the play, psychiatric assessment, psychological assessment, functional and educational assessment, and social investigations through parental interviews and home visits.

### Nursing diagnosis

Paediatric nurses should utilize their clinical judgement to determine which elements of a focussed assessment are pertinent for the child with specific problems, who are under assessment. This navigates the nurse to formulate appropriate nursing diagnoses such as;

- Risk for delayed child growth
- Risk for delayed child development
- Impaired infant neurodevelopmental organization
- Impaired psychological comfort
- Ineffective emotion regulation
- Impaired mood regulation
- Maladaptive coping
- Impaired resilience
- Impaired social interaction
- Impaired family process
- Impaired parenting behaviours
- Impaired physical mobility
- Inadequate nutritional intake
- Inadequate health literacy

### Planning

Nurses working in different settings /areas of CGC help the children with different problems and needs to function to their greatest capability and to fulfil their highest possible potential.

### Care co-ordination and support networks

Nurses facilitate access to support networks, manage care plans, and coordinate with other professionals to address the diverse needs of children and families.<sup>10,11</sup> In CGC nurses are co-ordinating appointments, referrals to other specialists, and follow-up care to ensure continuity of treatment as part of planning in case management process.

### Implementation

#### Family engagement

Building trust with parents and caregivers by actively listening to their concerns, providing emotional support, and educating them about the child's diagnosis and treatment plan. Organizing group counselling for parents with similar problematic children will help the parents to be sensitive towards each other, and also plan group counselling for children and adolescents for child mental health. Nurse in CGC assist family to establish short and long-term goals for child and importance of integrating the child into family activities at a slow pace.

### Medication management

Administering medications as prescribed, monitoring for

side effects, and educating families about proper medication use are major aspects of nursing care in CGC related to medication management. It also includes, creating awareness regarding the availability of medicines and other facilities through various agencies and schemes.

### Health Monitoring and Promotion

Nurses conduct health assessments, monitor child development, and promote preventive health practices. They use both directive and flexible strategies to engage children during health visits, fostering their involvement and supporting their overall well-being <sup>[12]</sup>. This includes identifying developmental delays or concerns, providing age-appropriate activities to promote healthy development, and collaborating with therapists to address specific needs as part of developmental assessment. By observing child behaviour during clinic visits, documenting key observations, and communicating findings to the treatment team.

### Guidance and Education

Nurses offer guidance to parents and children on child development, care, and education, helping families address child-rearing challenges and promoting healthy development. Structured guidance from nurses has been shown to improve both parental knowledge and child developmental outcomes <sup>[13]</sup>. Providing information on topics like nutrition, sleep hygiene, stress management, and coping mechanisms relevant to the child's specific challenges. In addition to this, nurses educate parents about the different training programmes for children with special needs in the community. Impart information regarding condition of the child with special needs helps to avoid giving misleading information or building false hopes in the parents <sup>[14]</sup>.

### Advocacy

Supporting the child and family by advocating for their needs and connecting them with community resources when necessary. By organizing and coordinating sensitization programs for school principals, teachers, and parents, in CGC is part of its advocacy program for promoting children's mental health <sup>[15]</sup>.

### Evaluation

An intuitive observation by a pediatric nurse about children and their family dynamics is essential to evaluate the need-based interventions rendered to them in CGC. <sup>16</sup> Nursing care evaluation in a child guidance clinic focuses on a holistic assessment of the child and family's physical, emotional, and behavioral health, using a multidisciplinary team approach.

### Conclusion

Nurses in child guidance clinics are vital for delivering comprehensive care, supporting mental health, guiding families, and safeguarding children. Their effectiveness depends on specialized training, collaboration, and a holistic approach to child and family well-being. Nurses bring a unique perspective by addressing the child's physical health needs, which can have a significant impact on their mental and emotional well-being.

### Conflict of Interest

Not available

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Not available

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