

Communication techniques used by pediatricians in the well-child program visits. A
pilot study

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Abstract

Good communication between a parent and pediatrician may increase therapeutic adherence and the parent's satisfaction. That is why the pediatrician's main activity in a consultation is getting and giving information.

Objective: To analyze what occurs during the pediatrician visits of the well-child program, namely the communication techniques used by the pediatricians.

Methodology: We have analyzed 49 visits to five pediatricians in Seville (Spain). In order to study these visits we audio-taped them and transcribed the tapes. In order to quantify the communication techniques used by the pediatricians we developed a check list with 27 categories divided into three main communication tasks in a primary care visit: "concrete data gathering," "narrative support" and "information & counseling."

Results: We have identified 2025 instances by which pediatricians used a communication technique, 1201 (59%) instances by which pediatrician used a communication technique to get information and 824 (41%) instances by which they gave information and counseling. Pediatricians used a limited range of techniques to inform and counsel and to give narrative support. Significant differences between pediatricians were observed in the use of most techniques.

Conclusion: A limited range of communication techniques was observed. The lack of homogeneity between pediatricians suggested different styles of communication, depending on the quantity and quality of communication techniques.

Practice implications: This result can be regarded as a useful hypothesis, and should be confirmed with larger pediatrician samples, because it would help to understand

consultation practices better and this in time may help improve communication with parents.

Keywords: communication techniques; pediatricians; parents; well-child program.