Health Promotion in German Day-Care Centres: Fact or Fiction in Everyday Work?

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BACKGROUND

Health is - according to the WHO’s Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion- “a resource for everyday life” [1]. Despite the good general health status of German youngsters, results of the German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents (KiGGS) indicate that overweight/obesity and behavioural problems are becoming increasingly relevant health issues in 3- to 6-year-olds [2, 3]. That is why health promotion is a relevant issue even for preschoolers.

Health promotion (HP) is focusing on enlarging the total quality of life and not only minimizing selected risks of diseases. The WHO’s Ottawa Charter [1] is describing HP as reaching “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”. HP in line with the WHO’s definition refers “to enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health” [1]. A positive concept of health like this is founding on personal and social resources. Therefore HP is an issue that is relevant for day-care centres (DCCs) work.

Despite the high relevance of health promoting activities for preschoolers and DCCs, empirical data about this issue are lacking.

OBJECTIVES

It is unknown how HP according to the Ottawa Charter is transferred into German DCCs work. That is why we wanted to evaluate how this concept is realized in German DCCs. The research addresses the following questions:

• How is HP realized in daily routines?
• Do DCCs have a notion of health and HP according to the WHO’s Ottawa Charter?

METHOD

Included in a survey [4] with several topics, n = 1,806 randomly chosen DCCs all over Germany answered a structured written questionnaire concerning the meaning of health promoting activities in their service.

RESULTS

Health promotion in DCCs daily routines

Figure 1. Integration of issues of HP in daily routines (% of DCCs).

- HP is not an important topic: 91.3%
- Promoting children’s health means additional work: 33.6%
- Practicing HP influences daily routines: 80.4%

- HP is an important topic in everyday work.
- 33.6% of all DCCs state HP for children is additional work for professionals. DCCs in Western Germany (36.3%) think about this more critically than DCCs in Eastern Germany (22.7%; p=0.0131).
- Practicing HP influences daily routines in DCCs strongly (80.4%). DCCs in Eastern Germany (93.5%) differ significantly in this appraisal from DCCs in Western Germany (77.8%; p=0.0211).

Understanding of health and health promotion

Figure 2. Interpretation health and health promotion (% of DCCs).

- Successive HP is determined by aspects of DCCs social climate: 57.3%
- HP is mainly preventing drug addiction: 34.9%
- Children have daily the chance to romp around: 93.7%

- DCCs do not see HP being influenced by the services’ social climate.
- 34.9% of all DCCs do agree that HP is mainly the prevention of drug addiction. DCCs in Western Germany (37.5%) are significantly more often in line with this statement than services in Eastern Germany (21.0%; p=0.0173).
- 93.7% of all DCCs give children the chance to romp around daily.

CONCLUSIONS

1. DCCs in Germany present an inconsistent understanding of HP. The accordance with the WHO’s definition is slightly.
2. Instead of HP, disease prevention and health education are practiced. This can be a hint for a starting conceptual discussion with this issue in German DCCs.
3. Although Germany is a re-unified country for about 20 years, differences in pedagogical attitudes of professionals concerning HP between Eastern and Western Germany can be found.
4. Efforts for qualification of professionals in the area of HP are needed.
5. To sum up, HP according to the WHO’s Ottawa Charter is not really practiced in most of Germany’s DCCs.

REFERENCES


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