Caring for Infants with Congenital Heart Disease Prior to Cardiac Surgery: The Impacts on Families *

Arunrat Srichantaranit, Ratanawadee Chontawan

Abstract

Purpose: To describe the impact of caring for infants with congenital heart disease (CHD) prior to cardiac surgery on families.

Design: Descriptive qualitative methods were performed in this secondary analysis study. Primary data from a study of “Thai families’ caring practices for infants with congenital heart disease prior to cardiac surgery” were used for the analysis.

Methods: Purposive sampling was used to recruit twelve parents and two family members, from eight families, who brought their infants with CHD, 3-17 months, to a university hospital in Bangkok. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and field notes, and analyzed through use of thematic content analysis.

Main findings: The impacts on families included 1) Living with stress and worry about fatal diagnosis, the heart surgery, monitoring the child’s symptoms, and financial constraints, 2) Being exhausted and hardly ever take outing, to relax, or to take part in usual activities, and 3) Effect on the family members living under the same roof including the child’s father and siblings.

Conclusion and recommendations: Nurses should assume active roles to promote nursing care, including performing family assessment, giving information, facilitating the support programs for families, and providing more emotional support for families in the context of family at the time of diagnosis throughout the surgical operation phase to maintain quality of life for the children and their family.

Keywords: cardiac surgery, caring, congenital heart disease, impacts

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