

# THE EFFECTS OF AN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM ON THE COMPETENCE OF CAREGIVERS IN CARING FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH ACUTE LEUKEMIA UNDERGOING CHEMOTHERAPY

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**Keywords:** Empowerment program, caregiver competence, preschool children, acute leukemia, Gibson's theory.

**Purpose:** To evaluate the effects of an empowerment program on caregivers' competence in caring for preschool children with acute leukemia undergoing chemotherapy.

**Design:** Quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group.

**Methods:** Samples contained 30 caregivers of children with acute leukemia, age 3-6 admitted for chemotherapy in Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health. Fifteen caregivers in the experimental group participated in the 9 session empowerment program to enhance knowledge and competence in caring for acute leukemia in children undergoing chemotherapy, focusing on the following areas; (a) infection, (b) mucositis, (c) nausea and vomiting, (d) alopecia, (e) psycho-social state, (f) diarrhea, (g) bleeding, (h) anemia, and (i) health promotion. The empowerment program was composed of 4 steps: discovering reality, critical reflection, taking charge, and holding. The program was developed and based on the process of empowerment as conceptualized by Gibson's theory. The fifteen caregivers in the control group received the usual nursing care. Data were collected by questionnaires assessing knowledge and competence of caregivers in caring for preschool children with acute leukemia undergoing chemotherapy. Data analysis was performed using ANCOVA with pretest knowledge scores as well as competence in caring scores as covariates.

**Main findings:** Results revealed that the mean scores of caregiver knowledge in the experimental group were statistically, significantly higher than those in the control group from the 4<sup>th</sup> week. The mean scores of caregiver's competence in the experimental group were statistically, significantly higher than those in the control group from the 4<sup>th</sup> week.

**Conclusion and recommendation:** The results suggest that nurses should consider utilizing this empowerment program to develop caregiver knowledge, and to enhance caregiver competence in caring for preschool children with acute leukemia undergoing chemotherapy.

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