

Systematic Efforts to Support Children with Developmental Disabilities or Behavioral Issues through Volunteer Initiatives

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Background

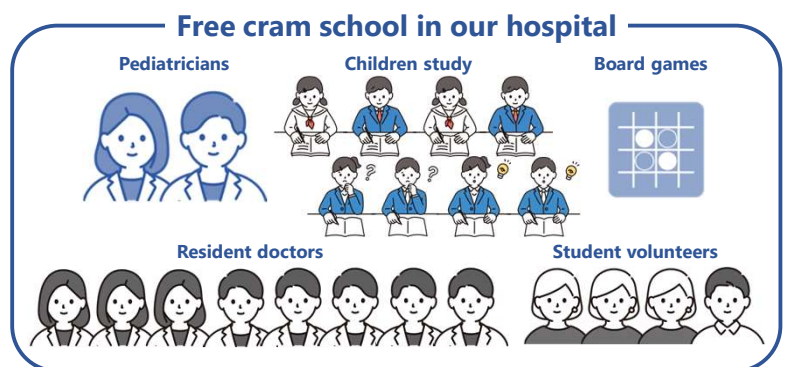
In recent years, in Japan, there has been growing interest in creating places for children to stay and in providing food and nutrition education for children living in poverty. It leads to an increase in activities such as children's cafeterias and free cram schools. Some of the children who gather for these activities are developmentally disabled or exhibit problematic behavior, and volunteers often have a difficulty dealing with them. Also, we hear concerns about how to treat them and whether they should be excluded. At our facility, pediatricians, together with residents and students, regularly hold free cram school as volunteer activity. In order to support the residents and volunteer students to continue this activity smoothly, we interview them regularly to see if they have any problems. The presentation will be based on an evaluation of whether this activity is meaningful and necessary nationwide.

Our activities

In our hospital, free cram schools are offered twice a month for children in the community. Pediatricians, residents, and student volunteers to teach the children. While teaching, we have fun with the children, for example by playing board games.

Intervention

Three years after the start of activity, 12 people (aged 20-47), 8 residents and 4 student volunteers, were surveyed.



Result

The most common reason for participating in the activities was that they wanted to have relation with children (8 persons, 73%). As they also be interested in pediatrics, and that they were interested in activities in the hospital. As for the reason for their continuous participation in the activities, 75% (9 persons) said that they enjoyed the activities (Fig. 1). In addition, 25% (3 persons) said it was for their children's or their own growth. In the activities, 92% (11 persons) felt difficulties, most of which (10 persons) were communication difficulties (Fig. 2). On the other hand, all the volunteers felt that their growth during the activities. Among them, over the half felt that their communication skills with children had improved (7 persons) and that their abilities to deal with difficult children had improved (6 persons) (Fig. 3). In addition, all of them (5 out of 5) said that they were able to much more participate in the activities because of consulting pediatrics on difficult cases. As for consultation opportunities, more than half (6 persons) said they would like to have more opportunities than previous (Fig. 4).

Figure 1. Reason of continuing volunteer activities (n=11)

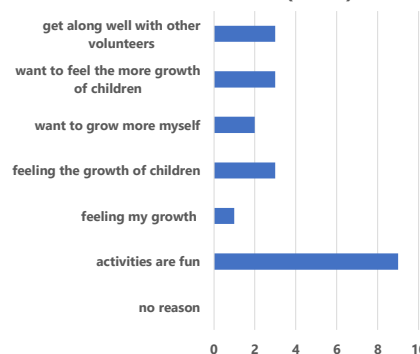


Figure 2. Difficulties which volunteers feel (n=11)

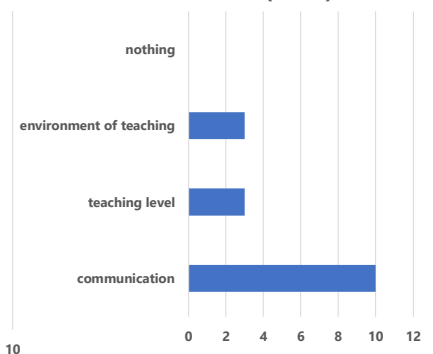


Figure 3. Personal growth felt through the activities (n=11)

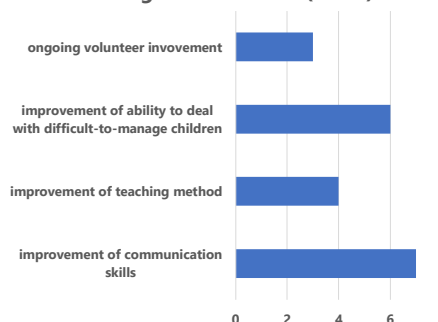
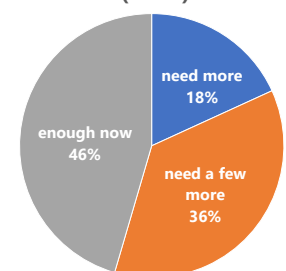


Figure 4. Consultation opportunities (n=11)



Vision

By this survey, we were able to learn about the difficulties which volunteer participants felt and their own personal growth. We also found that participants were seeking more opportunities for consultation than we had anticipated, so we decided to provide more opportunities in future activities and to provide feedback regularly. In the future, we intend to teach residents' and volunteer participants' communication skills for children who have difficulty, and help them for improving themselves.