Placing the child into the center of self-care: reflections about cognitive development and health literacy in childhood

Posicionando a criança no centro do seu cuidado: reflexões sobre o desenvolvimento cognitivo e o letramento em saúde infantil

Posicionar a los niños en el centro de su cuidado: reflexiones sobre el desarrollo cognitivo y la alfabetización en salud infantil

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new abilities of understanding and acting upon the reality. When in adolescence, he/she will strike
the final stage of the cognitive development, identical to adult reasoning.

Vygostsky\(^4\) theory states the concept about the zone of proximal development, defined as the
difference between what the child is able to accomplish with help of others and what the child is
able to perform alone. Vygostsky refers to a dynamic assessment, including both intelligence and
the child’s individual skills, as well as the support given by peers and family to their self-care. Thus,
health care professionals in the pediatric field must analyze the child HL abilities considering the
care provided by the child’s support network.

Evaluating the child’s HL within the developmental context may aid age-appropriate materials
and educational programs. When health concepts and behaviors become culturally and socially rel-
vant to the child, youth can comprehend them even earlier than expected for their age\(^3\). Therefore,
the continuing promotion of HL categories allow children and adolescents to turn into individuals
with critical thinking.

In the past 20 years nurses concerns about their empowerment to adequately communicate with
the pediatric population was evident. A nurse capable of efficiently communicating with children may
embrace them into their own health care and obtain the child informed consent to decision making\(^6\).
Currently in the pediatric nursing field, the HL has been consolidated and surfaces the development
of interventions aiming to empower children to self-care. Youth with adequate HL acquire skills that
may influence health outcomes and well-being over their life course\(^2\). In this sense, the assessment
of the HL construct in childhood must be incorporated in nursing care and research, assuring the
children’s rights of being listened to and placed into the center of their self-care.

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