

Corporal Punishment: Evaluation of an Intervention by PNPs

The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) is committed to improving the health of America's children. NAPNAP has long recognized that both physical and emotional/psychological trauma has negative effects on the well being of children. To that end for over ten years NAPNAP has formally opposed the use of corporal punishment (CP) in homes and schools. CP has been linked to a number of negative consequences for children, including physical abuse, externalizing behavioral problems, and slowed cognitive development.

Recognizing that many American parents continue to use CP ten members of NAPNAP's Child Maltreatment Special Interest Group (CM SIG) collaborated on a joint educational / research project. The purpose of the study was to evaluate learner attitude toward CP before and after implementation of a PNP-designed educational intervention and to describe influences upon learner attitudes and beliefs about CP. Learners were the over 700 health care professionals, primarily nurses, who attended the educational intervention (EI). The EI was a 60 minute Power Point presentation which defined discipline and punishment, discussed research related to the effects of CP use on children and global efforts to eliminate its use, and offered alternative methods of discipline. The EI was originally developed as a part of the No Hitting Zone program at Rainbow and Babies Children's Hospital in Cleveland, OH.

Nearly all learners stated that the way their parents disciplined them influenced their attitudes toward CP. Few (14%) learners who were also parents reported that their child's health care provider had ever discussed child discipline with them. Prior to the educational intervention nearly 40% of learners endorsed spanking as sometimes necessary, yet after the intervention only 28% did so. Child discipline management was included in the health care provider education for fewer than half of learners.

It has been well documented that CP has the potential to result in negative consequences for children, yet many American parents continue to use CP as a form of child discipline, and some pediatric health care professionals continue to endorse its use. Pediatric health care providers need to consistently educate patients and families about healthy child discipline and CP.

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Collaborating Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

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