

## NURSING CARE IN PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGICAL CARE: A “SUPERDOSE” OF LOVE

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*Jucimar Frigo*

Universidade Comunitária da Região de  
Chapecó

Chapecó – Santa Catarina

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0572-1352>

*Adria Fontana Marchi*

Universidade Comunitária da Região de  
Chapecó

Chapecó – Santa Catarina

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/3272571354863291>

*Dircelene Terezinha Pfeifer*

Universidade Comunitária da Região de  
Chapecó

Chapecó – Santa Catarina

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0741-3927>

*Emanuela Letícia Tacca Jellinek*

Universidade Comunitária da Região de  
Chapecó

Chapecó – Santa Catarina

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1540-6225>

*Karine de Lima Santin*

Universidade Comunitária da Região de  
Chapecó

Chapecó – Santa Catarina

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3060-277X>

*Kauany Giaquini de Lazzari*

Universidade Comunitária da Região de  
Chapecó

Chapecó – Santa Catarina

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7975-171X>

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***Sthefani Colpani***

Universidade Comunitária da Região de  
Chapecó

Chapecó – Santa Catarina

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9447-4191>

**Abstract:** Cancer represents the leading cause of death from disease among children and adolescents aged 1 to 19 years. Pediatric oncology is characterized by a series of stressful experiences for the child. In order to make chemotherapy treatment more humanized, Nursing can use playful resources that encourage interaction and integration in a hospital environment. The present theoretical investigation aims to reflect on Nursing care in pediatric oncology care from the use of the chemotherapy package “Superdose of love”, as a playful technology of distraction. During the Primary Care Nursing course IV: Child and Adolescent Health, the students sought a way to de-characterize the chemotherapy bottle used in pediatric oncology, since when viewing the bottle, the children had an immediate reaction of discomfort. This report describes the execution of a chemotherapy package, the “Superdoses de amor”, distributed among some spaces and services that provide pediatric oncological care, in which the drawings that print them were created by Nursing students. Illness in children promotes rapid and intense transformation in their lives, with unexpected hospitalizations, in which the child will be subjected to invasive tests and treatments. Packaging is a way of promoting health education through students, we believe that they minimize resistance to treatment, as children are inspired by these figures. They are also a distraction technology for healthcare professionals and present themselves as a low-cost and innovative resource.

**Keywords:** Pediatric oncology. Chemotherapy. Nursing.

## **PRESENTATION**

In Brazil, the incidence of childhood neoplasms, according to the National Cancer Institute (INCA) for 2020, was 8,460 new cases. As in developed countries, cancer already represents the leading cause of death

(8% of the total) from disease among children and adolescents aged 1 to 19 years (INCA, 2022).

Temporarily, childhood cancer refers to diseases that have characteristics of disordered and abnormal cell proliferation that can occur in any part of the body, compromising tissues and organs. In this sense, the neoplasms that stand out for being the most common in childhood are leukemias that affect white blood cells, called defense cells (BRASIL, 2022).

Pediatric oncology is characterized by a series of stressful and suffering-laden experiences for the child and his/her family. Generally, it involves prolonged treatment, which demands care and the need for changes, which can lead the child, adolescent and their families to a state of depression, isolation, hopelessness, inferiority and inadequacy, with an increased risk of psychiatric problems. In this environment, the Nursing professional needs to find ways to face the wear and tear arising from their work activity (ALENCAR et al., 2015).

Nursing care manifests itself in the preservation of the healthy potential of the oncological child. Care means care, solicitude, diligence, zeal, attention and is materialized in the context of life in society. In Nursing practice, caring implies a way of being with the other, with regard to special issues of community life and its social relationships, the promotion and recovery of health (SILVA E LIMA et al., 2022).

Also, the way of caring, sensitivity, intuition, availability, affection, love, scientificity, listening, spontaneity, respect, empathy, commitment, understanding, ethics, touch, dialogue, caring for the other, are the essential elements that make the difference in Nursing care for pediatric oncology children (KAHL et al., 2018).

In this care bias, treatment for oncological

children is based on chemotherapies, radiotherapy and surgical interventions. At the moment, there are no measures capable of preventing the progression of childhood cancer in primary care. However, early detection is the main strategy for secondary prevention, in which a diagnosis in early stages allows for a more reliable and less aggressive treatment, increasing the probability of cure and reducing sequelae of the disease or treatment (NEVES; MENDES; SANTOS, 2017). Furthermore, in most cancer treatments, continuous and multidisciplinary Nursing care for these children is vital, because for their subconscious, therapeutic methods are “scary and frightening”, often associated with death (SOUZA et al., 2022).

Seeking to answer this complex challenge, Nursing care in pediatric oncology care, undergoing chemotherapy, is the insertion of playful activities that allow the child to be authentic. This method of caring through play helps the child to better understand what is happening to them, in addition to helping them learn to deal with their emotions and positive and negative feelings in relation to chemotherapy treatment, as well as establishing interpersonal relationships with other children. and with the professionals involved (MORAIS et al., 2018).

It must be noted that, when professionals are committed to providing quality care to oncological children, it is necessary to build a theoretical framework to bring greater contributions to Nursing care and provide quality of life to children with cancer, which can reduce cases that progress to death (SANTANA et al., 2017).

In view of this, the role of nurses in pediatric oncology is extremely relevant, as this is the one who has the most contact with the child and family during the disease process. Therefore, it is important for nurses to be prepared and combined with theoretical

knowledge, in order to provide a good reception, with qualified listening to facilitate care and make this process less painful, both for the child and for the family (DUARTE; ZANINI; NEDEL, 2012). ; SILVA et al., 2013).

In view of this, the use of playful tools with children promotes biopsychosocial development and bonding, stimulating communication between reality and imagination. In the pediatric hospital context, play can alleviate the repercussions associated with the disease process, as well as the therapy and technologies used in chemotherapy treatment (SILVA et al., 2021).

Thus, in order to minimize trauma and make the chemotherapy treatment more humanized, Nursing can use playful resources that stimulate curiosity, interaction and integration in a hospital environment. This way, it promotes the development of intellectual, creative, emotional and expressive functions, in addition to stimulating the creation of bonds between health professionals involved in the therapeutic process. As an example, we can mention as a playful resource the use of the chemotherapy package “Superdose of love” (SANTOS; SANTOS; SILVA, 2017).

The present theoretical investigation aims to reflect on Nursing care in pediatric oncology care from the use of the chemotherapy package “Superdose of love” as a playful technology of distraction.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Experience Report describes the experience articulating it to the theoretical-practical scientific routine. Thus, this report derives from an experience in the scope of the Nursing discipline in Primary Care IV: Child and Adolescent Health, taught in the sixth phase of the undergraduate course in Nursing, at the Community University of Chapecó Region (Unochapecó), based in in

Chapecó (SC), developed between April and December 2021.

The Experience Report asserts itself as a scientific narrative that involves complex processes that configure subjective productions that perform, through language, the experience of professional work. In this context, the authors describe and analyze events and temporalities (DALTRO; FARIA, 2019). Thus, this report is effective as a powerful description method for understanding the unique perspectives in Nursing care for pediatric oncological children in the context of a Children’s Hospital that is a reference in oncological care.

This semester, during the development of theoretical-practical activities at Hospital da Criança, nursing students recognized that the orange packaging used in chemotherapy bottles caused an immediate reaction of discomfort, anxiety and anxiety in children with oncological pathologies. stress.

From this scenario, the question arose: how to mischaracterize the chemotherapy bottle used in pediatric oncology care? Therefore, this report aims to describe the experience of planning, execution and evaluation of a chemotherapy package as a unique form of nursing care. Faced with the situation experienced, the academics developed packages entitled “Superdoses of love” (Figure 1), as a way of mischaracterizing chemotherapy bottles in the pediatric oncology sector.

In addition, all eight designs on the packaging were created by the Nursing students themselves. In Figure 2, images of chemotherapy packages.

In this current of empathy, good partners came along the way and helped make the idea a reality. In partnership with the company Fullpack Embalagens, 9,500 units were produced free of charge, which were distributed among some spaces and services that provide pediatric oncology care: Hospital

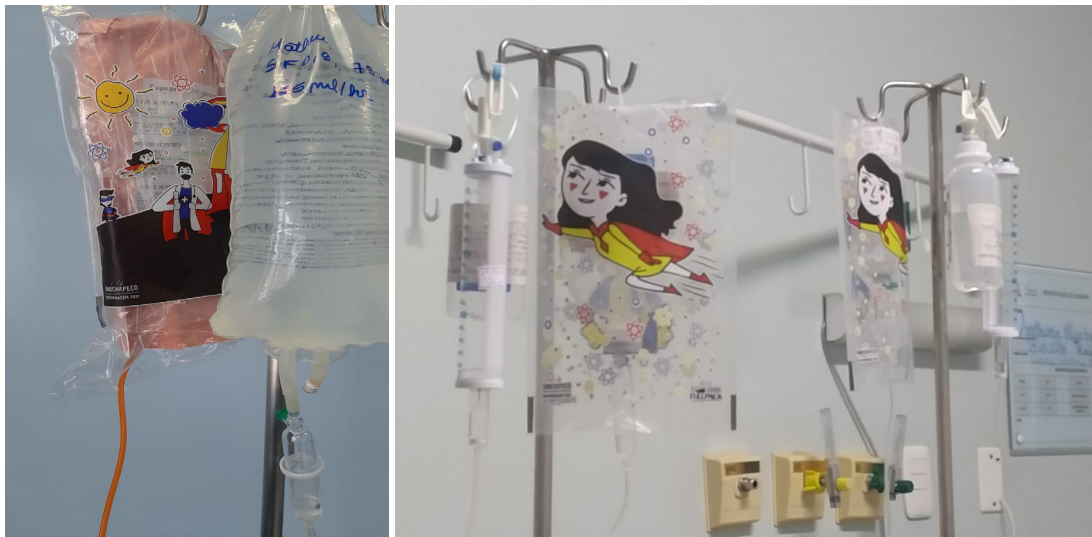


Figure 1: “Superdoses of love” packaging being used in pediatric cancer treatment at Hospital da Criança, in 2022.

Source: elaboration of the authors (2022).



Figure 2: Drawings that stamp chemotherapy packages, in 2022.

Source: elaboration of the authors (2022).



da Criança Augusta Müller Bohner, Oncology Ambulatory of Unimed Chapecó and the Regional Hospital de Xanxerê – pediatric inpatient ward, Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional (APAE), Patrick Psychophysical Activities Center (CAPP) and Support House of the Women’s Network. Figure 3 illustrates this moment.

The reflections and experiences described were obtained through participant observation, focusing mainly on relationships within the family context, the level of understanding of the information received and the feelings and expectations expressed in this meeting. An observer is considered a participant when he integrates himself into a group and its life. An important contrast in this process is the degree of involvement with the people and activities that are observed. In this method of data production, it is convenient to draw up a plan on the nature of the participation that is intended, what will be revealed about the study to the people of the place, what is the intensity of participation and the focus of this (MARIETTO, 2018).

In participant observation, the academic gets involved, actively participates in data collection activities, requiring the researcher’s

ability to adapt to the situation, which allows access to common situations and events, being difficult to capture through interviews or tools of research. self-assessment (MONICO et al., 2017).

As this is an experience report research, characterized by descriptive and narrative research, it was not necessary to submit this study to the Ethics Committee in Research with Human Beings. However, the researchers kept all the ethical precepts recommended for research of this nature, referring to the analysis and publication of data. To publish the images of the hospital environment, the Consent Term for the use of Image and/or Voice was used, according to the Unochapecó Ethics Committee in Research Involving Human Beings.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The Primary Care Nursing course IV: Child and Adolescent Health proved to be a methodological strategy favorable to learning, providing students and professors with a way to adapt to active technologies and methodologies, leaving the basic resources used daily in the university routine, in line with the transformations of the globalized



Figure 3: Institutions that received the “Superdoses de amor” packages in 2022.

Source: elaboration of the authors (2022).

world. The theoretical-practical activity, in the pediatric hospital environment, proved to be a pedagogical method capable of instilling autonomy and academic protagonism in Nursing students, supporting personal and professional growth and development (SANTOS; CECCHETTI, 2021).

However, it was noticeable that teaching requires much more than the mastery of certain contents in Nursing, it is necessary that professors learn new methodologies with progressive pedagogical approaches that help in the development of a teaching capable of transforming the practices of academics. From the practice in the hospital, Nursing students were able to understand and (re) know the health care that emerges from the pediatric oncological context.

Accordingly, the demands exercised by the nurse with the oncological child may, to some extent, mitigate the stressors present in each of the stages of the disease and treatment. In oncological care, children undergo repeated hospitalizations, which are necessary for treatment, and thus have their daily routine modified. This scenario presents itself with its singularities, such as the greater presence of the family, the need to make the place and the service even more favorable to comprehensive care (SILVA et al., 2021; SANTOS et al., 2021).

Illness in children promotes rapid and intense transformation in their lives and also in their family routine, unexpected hospitalizations, with unknown people, in which the child will be subjected to invasive and painful exams and treatments, being removed from their social context, family and friends. Regardless of their age group and ability to cognitively understand reality, this makes them realize that something different is happening to them (GOMES; COLLET; REIS, 2011).

From this perspective of care, children and adolescents gained an important

reinforcement in specialized care, the National Policy for Attention to Pediatric Oncology. This Policy, instituted in March 2022, intends to increase survival rates, improve quality of life and reduce mortality and treatment abandonment of children and adolescents with cancer, through actions aimed at prevention, early detection and to the treatment of the disease, as well as to social assistance and palliative care for patients (BRASIL, 2022).

Currently, the most prescribed forms of treatment for children with cancer are chemotherapy, in combination or not with surgery, and radiotherapy. Chemotherapy administration in Brazil is done through peripheral venous access, and the unit nurse is responsible for the infusion of drugs. Knowledge regarding the risks caused by these vesicant and irritating antineoplastics, such as extravasation, its prevention and the treatment itself must be part of their care (ALVES; GUIRARDELLO, 2016).

Among the types of treatment, chemotherapy is the most used in children and its administration can result in several side effects, such as the alopecia, apathy, anorexia, mucositis, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, neutropenia, bleeding and bruising. Furthermore, the child is vulnerable to the occurrence of infiltration and extravasation of intravenously infused chemotherapeutic agents. Such adverse events cause pain, burning along the peripheral venous access, skin lesions at the site and, probably, new therapeutic interventions (INCA, 2022; SANTOS et al., 2021).

Considering the conditions imposed by the treatment, it ends up demanding a considerable time of hospitalization for the oncological child, for it to be carried out or for the necessary care to be taken, when an intercurrentence arises. Thus, hospitalization is characterized as a stressor present in each of

the stages of the disease, which encompasses a series of other stressors, implying consequences on the normal development of the child (MOTTA; ENUMO, 2010).

On this treadmill, in the hospital environment, welcoming and care are fundamental in the care of any patient. However, when talking about the area of pediatric oncology, this care needs to be redoubled and loaded with extra doses of affection and comfort. Everyone deserves a unique care, but in relation to pediatric cancer treatment, there is a need that goes far beyond care focused on the biological body, requiring a more humane treatment, offering the child a different treatment from that provided to the adult, considering their needs. children and respecting their subjectivity (SILVA et al., 2021).

Thus, nursing care for oncological children provides an opportunity for a broader view of health care concepts and the construction of a bond between students and family, facilitating adherence to health promotion and disease prevention practices. The performance of the Nursing team to hospitalized children must be centered on the family, since this is considered the primary care unit, as well as key pieces capable of facilitating the entire process that involves caring. Extended family care, carried out through knowledge of the structure and functionality of families, aims to propose interventions that influence the health-disease processes of individuals, families and the community itself (PEREIRA et al., 2009).

We agree with the aforementioned authors that a collaborative and co-responsible family for care will be able to act in a much more resolute way for the recovery of health and disease prevention of their peers. In addition, their participation in health promotion becomes fundamental, since family members become co-participants in each other's lives and health. Also, caring, taking care, is an act

of love that aims to ensure the maintenance and continuity of life. The act of caring is common to all cultures, although its forms of expression can be the most varied.

It is worth mentioning that, in Nursing, care must be understood as the performance of actions, considering the satisfaction of a set of needs that, when met, allow greater involvement of family members in their activities with quality care. When we refer to the care of oncological children, we must understand their private world and the stages of childhood, always seeking to satisfy their needs, regardless of their current situation, to maintain their well-being (NEVES; MENDES; SANTOS, 2017).

Therefore, it is understood that the discipline of Nursing in Primary Care IV: Health of Children and Adolescents allowed an expanded observation of the child, highlighting its importance for the academic, for promoting means of approaching the main aspects of the health-disease process in the environment. pediatric hospital. Also, through the daily life of academics in the care of oncological children, they deserve attention and unique professional care and availability of time, generating positive experiences and favorable outcomes both for the family and for the learning of future Nursing professionals. We understand that theoretical-practical activity, in the hospital environment, is opposed to mere operationality and gives existential meaning to teaching. Therefore, thinking about ways of teaching in Nursing requires understanding the meaning of this process, its political-social dimension and its implication on the student's life.

It is worth noting that the packaging of "Superdoses of love" can bring benefits in caring for the family. As a strategy for transforming the meanings of pain and suffering into joy for the child, they help in the preparation of procedures to which they are



submitted, giving new meaning to the image of hospital objects and minimizing trauma, pain and suffering in the face of situations experienced. Unique care is capable of creating a bond of trust and credibility for the promotion and recovery of health, however, it must follow a standardized work method to achieve a satisfactory result. Below are some reports of Nursing care for oncological children:

Wow how creative, this makes them much more excited, comforts the children in such a difficult time. (Mother companion).

Nurse, I have five packs of superheroes, now there are seven packs left to finish the treatment. (Oncological child – 8 years old).

In such a difficult time for the child, all forms of love and care are worth it. (Godfather companion).

Nurse, can I take some packages to school. (Child oncology – 7 years old).

The packaging of “Superdoses of love” was characterized as a technology of distraction for children during invasive procedures, reducing the level of anguish, anxiety, pain, stress, in addition to helping the child to understand the disease and chemotherapy. Therefore, the packaging experience of “Superdoses of Love” generated the playful state, as the playfulness was experienced and expressed by each child, from the images of superheroes stamped on the packaging.

It is understood that playfulness, such as the packaging of “Superdoses of love”, proved to be a positive strategy that favored and raised awareness about the promotion and protection of the health of oncological children. The playful activity is external to the child and can be observed and described by another person while it is being performed. However, it will only be internally playful if it provides the subject with a feeling of fullness, pleasure and joy (BACELAR, 2009).

Corroborating this, Luckesi (2014) reinforces that the insertion of playfulness in cancer care is capable of changing the environment in which the child finds himself, approaching reality, which favors his hospitalization. Therefore, the playful activity has a therapeutic effect, considering everything that promotes well-being as therapeutic.

In the meantime, nursing care for oncological children, through playfulness and playfulness, provided children with an analogy of treatment and improvement of the disease with the help of superheroes. As the chemo treatment bottles are orange in color, as soon as they arrive in the rooms, children feel a sense of ‘pain and discomfort’ linked to the impact caused by the chemotherapy packaging. The disease itself and the constant hospitalizations can have a very large and negative psychological impact on children, to the point where their emotional development is compromised and creates a negative attitude towards health services. That’s how the idea of using superheroes came about, as they fascinate children, mainly because of their powers and strength, which permeate fantasy and imagination. The academic’s experience report in Nursing care reinforces the importance of playfulness and playfulness in pediatric cancer care:

A situation forever marked my formation and understanding of care. During the care practice, I was responsible for the care of a five-year-old oncological child, who was undergoing chemotherapy and was accompanied by his mother. At the beginning of the shift, the child was resistant, denied dialogue and eye contact. After many attempts and games to approach, we managed to establish an effective dialogue. Soon, the child verbally introduced his siblings, favorite cartoons, animated characters and superheroes. The look of happiness at that moment praised the environment, the innocence unleashed,

motivated us to continue more and more, the light breathing and imagination transported us to another emotional level. The child's emotion in receiving the chemotherapy treatment with the packaging of overdoses of love stamped by the superheroes marked my professional and personal trajectory. As we left the room, he requested some more packages to present to his brothers who were at home. And that was enough to make us realize that small gestures transform moments. (Nursing Student, sixth phase).

The complexity of pediatric oncology derives from the different interfaces of disease development. We believe that the "Superdoses de amor" packaging, in this colorful version and printed with images of superheroes, can reduce this feeling and minimize resistance to treatment, as children are inspired by these figures and it is possible to approach the subject in a more relaxed way. The initiative creates an atmosphere of love and understanding, which prioritizes the emotional state of children and adolescents with cancer. A way to increase smiles and the will to move on.

The "Superdoses of Love" packaging is a relevant distraction technology for health professionals in clinical practice and is presented as a low-cost, disposable, lightweight and innovative resource that can be widely used in pediatric oncology services.

Also, it is demonstrated as a means to promote health education for children with cancer and their families, involving them in care through the clarification of doubts and strategies to face difficulties experienced, being able to strengthen them during the experience of use of intravenous chemotherapy.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The Primary Care Nursing course IV: Child and Adolescent Health provided the opportunity to act autonomously, create bonds of trust and co-responsibility with families and with cancer children.

By (re)knowing the ways of coping with families in a situation of oncological disease, we were able to see that people and families are dynamic processes, which corroborated the difficult task of exercising the expanded vision of care, required of the Nursing student, to understand that the care is not restricted to epidemiological indicators and morphofunctional diseases, but to provide conditions for the person, family and community to achieve biological, psychological, spiritual, social and environmental health, knowing who they are, their health-disease conditions, their difficulties and strengths, their values and sociocultural environment.

Chemotherapy packages entitled "Superdoses of love" were characterized as a distraction technology, which provided, from the playful and playful side, benefits in the care of the family. This is an important strategy for transforming the meanings of pain and suffering into joy for the child, helping them to prepare for the different procedures to which they are submitted in the oncological treatment process.

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