

Child feedback in healthcare services: survey of expert opinion in New Zealand

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Background: The United Nations Convention on the Rights Of the Child (UNCROC) assures the “the right [of the child] to express ... views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” This implies the need for meaningful, age appropriate and effective approaches to hearing from children on how to improve their healthcare experience. Our aim was to investigate effective ways to obtain feedback from children about their healthcare experience.

Methods: Experts and practitioners involved in obtaining feedback from children were identified across child health, education, government and non-governmental sectors throughout New Zealand. Experts were identified through professional networks using a snowball methodology. Stratified purposeful sampling was applied to provide a spectrum of critiques on the inquiry, how best to seek feedback directly from children. The identified experts were surveyed using semi-structured interview tool, by face-to-face, video- or phone-conference. Interviews were recorded and free text notes compiled for thematic analysis.

Results: Fifteen interviews were completed and analysed, including a mix of clinicians, non-clinical practitioners, and content experts. Detailed reading of the interview text identified a set of key themes; high-level and strongly consistent categories included the value of trust and rapport, importance of tailoring approach to the child and identified principles for ethical practice with children.

Conclusion: Seeking feedback directly from children responds to their right to be heard and also to experience quality healthcare. This survey of expert opinion in New Zealand confirmed particular considerations when working with children. The study collates national expertise that further supports the development of meaningful approaches to listen actively to the ‘child voice’ in healthcare.