Mental Health Nurses Perceptions of Aggression in Children

Lorelei Faulkner-Gibson\textsuperscript{a}, RN, BSN, MN, CPHMN(C)
\textsuperscript{a}Clinical Nurse Educator, PHSA-Children’s & Women’s Mental Health Programs

Background. The research surrounding aggression in healthcare is expanding although “aggression and its impact have rarely been examined in nurses and other staff working with children and adolescents” (Dean, Gibbon, McDermott, Davidson & Scott, 2010). Yet aggression is a primary symptom of children brought to attention in healthcare (Bor, 2004; Dean et al., 2010). The majority of healthcare providers are nurses, with “40% of violence related claims come from healthcare workers who make up 5% of the workforce in BC, the majority of whom are nurses” (Worker’s Compensation Board of British Columbia, 2000, 2005).

Purpose. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions pediatric mental health nurses have of behaviour of five to ten year old children described as aggressive, and the factors that influence their interpretations and perceptions.

Methods. The research design was interpretive inquiry informed by Relational Inquiry (Hartrick Doane & Varcoe, 2005) as the theoretical framework. Kvale’s interpretive methodology informed my analysis and allowed me to be creative in my approach to the analysis. I used aspects of ‘meaning condensation’ and ‘meaning interpretation’ that Kvale refers to as “ad hoc meaning generalization” (Kvale, 1996, p. 203). Two interviews were conducted with each participant, transcribed verbatim.

Findings. The findings demonstrated the complexity of relational factors in the perceptions of aggression. The relational themes included the child, colleagues, system of care and the self, with emphasis on the dynamic affect of collegial relationships.

Implications. Until this study, there has been no qualitative research exploring paediatric mental health nurses perceptions of aggression in children. Future research would explore perceptions of other care providers; gender differences; and client/family perceptions. The main recommendation from this study is to offer nurses dedicated time to engage in self reflection such as clinical supervision.