Mothers’ and school nurses’ assessment of cough & cold impact on children’s quality of life

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BACKGROUND
- It is understood that children are especially susceptible to sickness during cough and cold season
- However, the extent to which these common illnesses affect daily function has never been validated quantitatively
- This study focuses on the perceptions of mothers and school nurses regarding the impact of cough and colds on children, and their wants and needs from healthcare professionals (HCPs)

STUDY OBJECTIVE
- To understand the quality-of-life impact of cough & cold season on school-aged children as observed by mothers and school nurses and the implications on pediatricians and pediatric nurse practitioners (NPs)

METHODS
Study Design
- This study was conducted in 2 parts, one with mothers and one with school nurses
  - Part 1 was an online survey conducted with mothers of children in grades pre-kindergarten through 8th grade between November 13, 2014 and December 8, 2014
  - Part 2 was a survey utilizing a mixed-mode methodology with school nurses who treat children in grades pre-kindergarten through 8th grade. Interviewers conducted the survey via phone and completed an online survey also between November 13, 2014 and December 8, 2014
- While mothers and nurses received different questionnaires, the questionnaire content was mirrored across both audiences. This provided the opportunity to see where the perspectives of mothers and nurses align and diverge

Participants
- 1002 mothers of children in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade
- 301 school nurses who treat children in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade were also surveyed

Statistical Analysis
- The margin of error among mothers was 3.1% and among school nurses the margin of error was 5.7%
- Results from both groups were at the 95% confidence level

FINDINGS

Desire for guidance but absence of dialogue
Mothers want guidance about how to deal with cough and cold, but there’s a disconnect with an HCP.
- 43% of mothers would like guidance on when to keep their children home from school when they are sick, but only 19% actually consult with an HCP
- Only 23% of mothers have discussed the impact that their child’s sickness has on his or her performance or behavior at school

Where do mothers turn for information and guidance regarding cough and cold? They often look to sources other than their primary HCP.
- Only 29% would contact an HCP to seek advice on over-the-counter treatments
- 55% have never discussed with an HCP the OTC medications that their children take

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS
- Quality of life is impacted in many ways, including a disruption in energy level, decreased ability to focus, and loss of valuable education time
- Greater attention needs to be paid to management of symptoms in children during cough and cold season to improve their quality of life
- That means that mothers need to have more conversations with HCPs about how to manage their child’s symptoms during cough and cold season
- NPs can be an integral part of closing this communication gap by advising mom, answering her questions, and bridging the gap between pediatricians and mothers

Impact on energy level
- Both groups agree that health issues during cough and cold season disrupt children’s energy, with 78% of mothers and 90% of school nurses reporting a disruption in energy level when suffering from a cold

Impact on ability to focus
- It stands to reason that reduced energy levels could affect children’s ability to focus on tasks. Both mothers and school nurses agree that coughs and colds have a negative impact on children’s ability to focus on completing tasks
- Additionally, 84% of school nurses report that children come to their office during cold and cough season frequently—if not always—because of trouble focusing or participating in class

Missed class time
- 51% of mothers say that illness impacts school attendance
- Nearly half (48%) of moms say that when their child has a cold, he or she is less likely to participate in extracurricular activities because of symptoms

Where mothers turn for information
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