

Thesis Title The Experiences of Thai School-age Children with Asthma

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Degree Doctor of Philosophy (Nursing)

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ABSTRACT

Asthma is a complicated chronic illness that causes physical, emotional, and psychosocial adjustment within children. Little is known about Thai school-age asthmatics understanding and management of this condition. The purposes of this study were to: describe the meaning of asthma from the children's perspective, explain the process of asthma management from their experience of living with asthma, and identify and describe variations influencing this process. A grounded theory methodology was employed to gain understanding of how Thai school-age children with asthma view their asthma and incorporate asthma care into everyday life, and to develop a substantive theory which explains the process of asthma management.

Twenty Thai school-age children with asthma from ages 9-12 years, who lived in Khon Kaen and nearby provinces, were recruited from the pediatric respiratory clinic of Srinakarind Hospital, Khon Kaen University. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, drawing and journaling with the children, and also interviews with their parents, teachers, and friends, reviews of health records, and observations. Data analysis was done by constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

“Gaining mastery over asthma” was the basic social psychological process that captured the process of learning to manage and control their asthma. Thai school-age children moved through the sequential phases of developing mastery from “neophyte” to “tentative” and then to “mastery” to become proficient in asthma management. At the neophyte phase, they lacked the knowledge and skills to manage and control the illness. Consequently they perceived it as “suffering.” They also engaged in the process of learning to control their symptoms. Age, experience with symptoms, maturity and responsibility, and support were factors that facilitated or constrained their mastery process. In the tentative phase, the children gained some knowledge, skills, and understanding of the nature of asthma symptoms and its effects. They accepted and perceived, “having limitations and restrictions.” The children tried to incorporate their condition into their daily lives by using strategies of learning to live with those limitations. The factors affecting their mastery of living with limitations were parenting styles, past experiences, accepting and awareness, hope for control, and support. In the mastery phase, conscious expectations of others and their own awareness of social norms, they perceived as “being different.” This then shaped the child’s response to asthma which emphasized their normality and minimized their differences by learning to live a normal life. The factors affecting their mastery of living a normal life were support of others, responses of others, and their perception of success. The process resulted in competence in ability, confidence in expertise, independence, and living as normal of a life as possible.

The findings of this study provide a basis for understanding the process of gaining mastery over asthma by Thai school-age children. In addition, nurses are able to develop their caring practice to assist their asthmatic children to gain mastery and achieve independence in accordance with children’s development related abilities.