RESUMEN

Objetivo: comprender la relación del jugar con el proceso de hospitalización infantil y sus posibles implicaciones. Método: esta es una revisión integradora de literatura que abarcó producciones acerca del jugar en la hospitalización publicadas en el período de 2005 a 2010. La búsqueda fue realizada de 13 de junio hasta 1° de julio de 2011. Para ese fin, fueron utilizadas las bases de datos Scielo, Lilacs y Medline, siendo investigados artículos en Inglés, español y portugués. Fueron utilizadas las siguientes palabras clave: juegos, brinquedos y hospital. Al final, se seleccionaron 29 artículos, clasificados en cuatro ejes temáticos: el jugar y la hospitalización infantil; la vivencia de la hospitalización desde la perspectiva del niño; visión de los cuidadores sobre el jugar en la hospitalización; y a la perspectiva de los profesionales sobre el jugar en el hospital. Resultados: el jugar, tanto para los acompañantes, los profesionales y las niñas, fue percibido de modo positivo, teniendo sus significados atribuidos a recreación, expresión de sentimientos y como contributing a la vida de desarrollo de la niña, siendo considerado, adicionalmente, una forma de enfrentamiento y minimización de los efectos negativos de la hospitalización. Conclusion: fue posible observar la importancia del jugar como recurso viable y adecuado para hacer frente a la hospitalización. Por lo tanto, el lúdico deje de ser apenas una manera de diversión para tornarse una herramienta fundamental para facilitar la adherencia al tratamiento y, así, el continuado desarrollo humano.

Descriptors: niño; juegos y juguetes; hospitalización; pediatría.

RESULTADOS

El jugar, tanto para los acompañantes, los profesionales y la niña, fue percibido de forma positiva, teniendo sus significados atribuidos a la recreación, expresión de sentimientos y como contribución a la vida de desarrollo de la niña, siendo considerado, adicionalmente, una forma de enfrentamiento y minimización de los efectos negativos de la hospitalización. Conclusion: fue posible observar la importancia del jugar como recurso viable y adecuado para hacer frente a la hospitalización. Por lo tanto, el lúdico dejó de ser apenas una manera de diversión para tornarse una herramienta fundamental para facilitar la adherencia al tratamiento y, así, el continuado desarrollo humano.
INTRODUCTION

In the last years, there has been a growing preoccupation with the effects of the environmental context about the human development, particularly about the childhood development. Among the several scopes that have been object of this preoccupation, the hospital environment is highlighted.¹

The process of infantile hospitalization is a remarkable experience in the life of a child, something that can be characterized as traumatic.² This is a moment of adaptation to a new environment, which owns its rules and schedules, of interruption of the daily activities, of absence of family and friends, of submission to invasive and painful medical procedures, of deprivation of the activity of playing besides the constant possibility of death.¹,²,³

All these factors, which are typical of the hospitalization, cause impacts in the life and development of the infants, something that can influence in the change of their behavior during and after the hospitalization. Then, for the child to be able to deal and adapt to this new adverse situation, it is needed that they own tools and efficient strategies of confrontation.⁴

Because of this, playing appears as a possible strategy of confrontation with the infantile hospitalization, as it enables the expression of feelings, fears, preferences and anguish. Playing also allows the child to elaborate the unknown experiences and enables the modification of the hospitalization daily life, of the behavior and the psychological structure of the child during the treatment, besides developing a therapeutic role.⁵

Many studies have pointed out the importance of playing during the process of the infantile hospitalization, because besides promoting some fun, this resource acts as a facilitator tool in the treatment adherence and in the continuity of the infantile development. These studies showed that the play influences even the relation adult/child and in the building of the subjectivity of each individual, acting as a via of access for their comprehension of the childhood world, being materialized as a language of good or bad experienced emotions.⁴,⁵

Taking into consideration the importance of the ludic activity in the process of development of the hospitalized infant, and the need of researches that enlarge the knowledge about the enhancement of the quality and the humanization of the assistance to the child¹,⁴, this study has as a support the following research question: how does the scientific literature approach the relation of the play with the process of infantile hospitalization? This way we highlight the relevance of this paper, enabling a better comprehension of the relation between the play and the hospitalization of the child, as well as a discussion upon the benefits associated with this resource.

OBJECTIVE

● To understand the relation of play with the process of infantile hospitalization and its possible implications.

METHOD

This is a study of integrative review of literature. For this it was carried out a bibliographical research of the productions about play in the infantile hospitalization from 2005 to 2010. The used sources for the bibliographical search were the virtual databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Latin-American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (Lilacs) and Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (Medline), and the searches happened from June 13 to July 1, 2011. The used keywords were games, toys and hospitalization; besides, it was considered the following inclusion criteria: articles that were complete and available for reading; that were published from 2005 to 2010; and, that approached play in the process of infantile hospitalization. It is important to point out that it was excluded the studies that approached play in other environments, or the ones that did not focus on the infantile hospitalization in its theme.

For the data appreciation it was used a qualitative analysis. Initially, it was performed an evaluation of the abstracts, grouping aspects considered relevant: 1 - Database in which the publication was available: Scielo, Lilacs and/or Medline; 2 - Objective of the study; 3 - Year of the article publication; 4 - Region of Brazil where the study was conducted; and, 5 - Area of knowledge.

This procedure had the weighing of three judges, something that enabled consensus, allowing the choice of papers which were fully
read. At the end, it was possible to outline the objectives, methods, quality, scientificity, divergences and corroborations between the articles.

From these criteria of search it was found 29 Brazilian publications in Portuguese. After this division, the articles were analyzed, listing the dimensions that have been investigated in the literature, making it possible to select four distinct thematic axes.

## RESULTS

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<th>Categorization of the articles</th>
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According to the obtained data, it is evident that there is an increase of publications in the last years which contain the investigated theme in this study. Most of them happened in 2010 and 2008, with a total of 8 articles in each period, followed respectively by the articles indexed in 2009 (five) and in 2007 (four) studies. In 2005 and 2006 it was published two in each year.

Concerning the variable of origin of the production, the region of Brazil where there were more performed studies about play in the infantile hospitalization in the last five years was the Southeast (16 articles), followed by the South (five articles) and the Northeast with four publications. We point out that it was found a production in the North region and none in the Midwest region. In addition, four articles did not mention the place of research.

Regarding the area of knowledge, it was found a concentration of studies in the nursing field (13), followed by psychology (6). The quantitative studies of multiprofessional nature numbered five publications. The physical education field presented an article in this review. We point out that five studies did not address which was the area of knowledge of the article’s author and neither the place of the research performance.

In a general way, the lack of the information mentioned above discourages a critical analysis, impeding replications of the found papers, and then, its possible corroborations and contrasts, with other studies. So, it is essential for the mapping of the academic productions, the presence of information about the regions in which they are developed, professionals and institutions and/or groups of studies to which they are linked, enabling a more thorough appreciation of the literature in this field.

## DISCUSSION

After reading and analyzing them, for a better comprehension, the studies were categorized by thematic nucleus, focusing mainly on the objectives and found results (quantitative and qualitative studies) and also, in the themes in discussion (review articles and experience reports). This analysis tried to evaluate the aspects inherent to the process of hospitalization, emphasizing the perspective of the child, the healthcare professionals and the caregivers about this process. Then, it was identified four axes which are presented and discussed as follows.

- **Play and the infantile hospitalization**

Generally the articles point to the importance of playing, as it is understood as a really valuable tool for any child, because it helps in their cognitive, social and emotional development. When a child plays, they do not do it in order to learn, build or mean, although these things may happen as the result of plays, this way, it has an end in itself.9 10

It is with the ludic activities that happens the building of yourself and there is the significance of the constitution of the individual of being a subject in the world, and of being with the world. The play is a language which the child uses to better explain the situation they are going through.10 This way, the ludic activities enable us to see the subjectivity expressions and elaborate the situations that are potentially traumatic.9

In this respect, it was thought about the insertion of this ludic activity in hospital
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aiming to demystify the illness/hospitalization process, as well as being the mediator of emotional and behavioral expressions. This proposal becomes relevant as the hospitalization brings a change of habits and routines and, many times, becomes mysterious and terrifying for the child, causing anxiety, fear, sadness, nervousness, anguish. Then, there can be psychic suffering and rupture of I and, consequently it turns difficult to adhere to the treatment.11,12

The literature shows that play is presented as an important resource of confrontation with the situation of hospitalization.5,13 The recreation can decrease the occurrence of cry, rage attack, fear and discouragement. The child starts dealing better with the stressors, contributing vehemently towards the continuity of the development. Some strategies are directly linked to the act of distraction (watch television, play videogame), being expressed as one of the responsible factors for the pain tolerance in this process of illness.3 Besides, it is possible to demystify the fear of hospital, relieving and solving conflicts, decreasing feeling of anguish derived from the illness and the hospitalization, as the emotions, anxieties and experiences are projected in the action of playing.19

However, studies show that play assumes a function that goes beyond the recreation, developing a therapeutic role. This happens, as it allows the child to stop behaving passively to behave actively towards the disease, in which they can control the environment in their imagination.6,14-16

In this context, a study performed with children in pre-operation period, aimed to use the therapeutic toy in the preparation of the child who would undergo the surgery, something that enabled the realization of the therapeutic role of playing. It provided the hospitalized child with interaction with the hospital environment and express their feelings and emotions, contributing to a better preparation of the child for the surgery procedures.6

The toy, then, is used as a strategy to relieve the anxiety of this atypical experience, helping in the procedures preparation and, in the treatment in a general way. The literature points possible results of play in the hospital context, such as behavior more adapted to the child, in which they respond to the stimuli and requests, improving the relationship with the healthcare team and with the family, so it is shown as a tool in the bonds strengthening. So, play, as an infantile language, provides decision-making and autonomy, leading the child to have the important control of the situation experienced by them.5,17-18

However, although the importance of play in the hospital context is highlighted in the literature, some researches point towards the non performance of ludic activities in this environment. Among the impossibility of playing, it is emphasized the physical restriction, the interference in the body mechanics, the pain and the treatment, precisely because there is a widening in the care and the preoccupation so that the child, who is already weakened, do not get hurt. On the other hand, this protection can cause an increase of the symptoms and turn the illness more severe.19,20

It is pointed out that the damage of the infantile hospitalization can be decreased due to factors such as support and the presence of family members, psychological attendance for the infant and their family, a structured and human environment that offers activities such as playing. These interventions enable the child to realize that they have conditions to better elaborate and adapt to the hospitalization process, softening the discomfort and suffering, favoring this way, the adherence to the treatment.11

This way, it is relevant to pay attention to the importance of the hospital institution providing a ludic and well structured environment, as play is a potential resource of protection and a resilience stimulator. Therefore, the use of this resource can help in obtaining some improvement in the infantile development.2

● The experience of the hospitalization in the perspective of the child

Besides the hospitalization being characterized as a potential traumatic experience, it can still cause anxiety in any individual, especially children. Because the feelings which can be triggered are many, besides the sensation of abandonment, there is the fear of the unknown, caused by inhabiting a totally new place, with rules, spaces and different people.1 In this respect a research showed, through the technique of draw-story, that the hospital is seen as a sad place, where the people fell alone, in which there is pain and suffering but, on the other hand, it is also seen as an institution that helps the child to be well and where they can play.21

There is still, in function of the unconscious fantasies, the possibility that the disease can
be felt by the child as a punishment, and then, can be experienced through the feeling of guilt. In this respect, due to the adaptation and perception mechanisms of the child are not completely developed yet, the hospitalization can mean for them, body damage, an aggression or penalty for something that they did or did not do.  

Concerning the perception of the children about the nursing team, it was found that there is an initial impact that could be caused by the place and by the clothes worn by the healthcare professionals. But despite this, the nursing team was seen as careful, worried and interested in the improvement of the child. It is highlighted that the manifestations about the team evidenced more intensely the positive aspects of the relation, something that can lead to the conclusion that the fears and anguish, initially more evident, can be minimized when there is a relation of affection, protection and care.  

According to a study, which aimed to comprehend the meaning of being hospitalized for the child, points that the way as the hospitalization experience is many times performed by the healthcare team, combined with the incapacity of the child to deal with the abstract, with the facts temporality and with the relations of cause and effect, turns this experience something difficult to understand and, then, mysterious and terrifying. Due to the fact of having little or no communication and/or explanation of the procedures the child is led not to understand what is happening with their body, because they are submitted to so many examinations and numerous restrictions.  

Regarding the family permanence, it was evident that with this the children feel more protected and accompanied, something that decreases the fear towards the unknown situation of the disease and the institutions. Besides, the companion minimizes the effects of the relation of the child with the healthcare team, because they work as a mediator of this relation. They represent, this way, someone who the child trusts and feel safe.  

Therefore, the researches mentioned above emphasize the importance of a good relationship of the child with the healthcare team. Then, it is relevant that a comprehension is possible, in an accessible language, concerning the used procedures, in order for the child to be able to better understand what is happening in their daily life during the hospitalization. Another aspect to be highlighted is the presence of family, which is seen as a relevant and positive factor that helps the infant in this context.  

- View of the caregivers about the play in the hospitalization  

The caregivers are fundamental allies in the adherence and continuity of the treatment of the child who is ill, and it is essential to point out the perception of them about the possible benefits of play during the hospitalization.  

A study that aimed to verify the perception of the companions towards the importance of the expressive and recreation activities in the hospitalization and in the surgery recovery of the children, evidenced that they present expression of positivity and acceptation regarding play, showing it as a reducer of anxiety and of the fear caused by the hospitalization process. Then, it is highlighted that the family members value an environment that favors the development of expressive and recreation activities and their interaction with the child. This cozy environment can ease the adaptation of the child and the family member to the hospital context and favoring, for both of them, the relief of the anguish and anxiety.  

During the hospitalization, the family, who for many times do not have the opportunity or time to play with the children at home, do it in a natural and spontaneous way. This activity is a source of leisure that reinforces the relationship between them and collaborates for the family to perform their role of mediators in the relations of the child with the world. Besides, it allows them to observe their children and realize their ability to adapt to the hospitalization.  

Another aspect to be emphasized is that the ludic activities also have therapeutic effects upon the parents, because they provide an opportunity of reorganization and rest. Even though they are playing with their children, they move, for a moment, their thought towards something besides the disease. This idea is corroborated in the study in which it can be realized, from the speech of some children and their parents, who participated in the research, how play can act in a therapeutic way, something that shows the importance of the playroom in this context.  

- Perspectives of the professionals about play in the hospitalization  

The literature points the acceptance of the healthcare professionals towards the activities of play addressed to the hospitalized children.
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They show that play is a really valuable resource, because through it, needs and feelings of the little patient can be revealed, play also helps the child in the comprehension of the situations and diagnostic and therapeutic procedures through which they will go, favoring calmness, security and acceptance of the treatment, besides easing the harmonious coexistence with the healthcare professionals.23

This way, the therapeutic toy is revealed as a fundamental tool for the healthcare professionals who work in pediatric units, especially in the preparation of the child to the invasive procedures, providing a better acceptance and cooperation. When they are not emotionally prepared for the hospitalization and for the hospital procedures, they can show a variety of behavior due to the fear of the unknown, committing their abilities to effectively cope with this experience.16

In this sense, a research, tried to investigate the benefits of the therapeutic toy which were experienced by the nurses who used this assistance practice for the child and their family. As a result, it was visible several benefits that the team experienced due to the use of the therapeutic toy such as: to better prepare the child and their parents for the procedures; promotion of the well-being of the child; minimization of the fear of the child; promotion of the development and socialization of the child; strengthening of the relation with the family; a better understanding of the child; feeling of fulfillment and, gratification and favoring of the interdisciplinarity.26

Another aspect which is really relevant for the healthcare professional is the benefits derived from the recreation activities developed by the entertainer (clowns) in hospital. For the team, the plays act as reducers of the stress caused by the hospitalization, as well as they contributed towards a better acceptance of the performed clinical procedures.25

Still in this context, we highlight the research performed with nurses about the performance of the Doctors of Happiness6 in the unit of pediatric hospitalization. It was possible to identify several benefits of the activities carried out by the clowns such as, changes in behavior towards the hospitalization, interaction and socialization with other children and an improvement of the ability of confrontation during the period of hospitalization.27

Playing in the process of hospitalization...

We point out, then, that there is a need of widening the studies about the play in the graduation and postgraduation degree courses, as this resource is characterized as an indispensable practice in dealing with the assistance and the well-being of the child, being established with the same importance of the scientific subjects which are taught.28 9

This aspect is confirmed in the study that aimed to describe the experience of students of the nursing degree course in the use of the Therapeutic Toy (BT) during the performance of the pediatric nursing training. It showed that the nursing students identified the BT as a relevant intervention, which enables them to reduce the traumatic effects of the infantile hospitalization. Concerning the play benefits, it is highlighted, then, the importance that this theme be approached in the academy.10

Therefore, the performance of the current research is relevant, as it discusses the results approached by studies that investigate the play in the context of the infantile hospitalization, contributing towards a better comprehension about this theme. Moreover, this paper can provide the base of actions to be developed in this context.

However, we emphasize that this was not a systematic review, and it was not included possible books, theses and dissertations that approached this theme. Moreover, it was not performed a consult to the references of the articles included in this research. But although the consultation to the materials that approached this theme was not used up, the review which was carried out enables a relevant reflection about play during the period of hospitalization of the child.

CONCLUSION

We highlight the importance of the present review when mapping and discussing the national scientific productions related to the theme of the importance of play in the infantile hospitalization, presenting a theoretical and practical framework of the efficiency of the ludic activities. Moreover, we tried to emphasize both the perception of the caregivers, and the professionals and the children themselves, approaching the subjects who are directly linked to the process of illness, and then, reaching the proposed objective of this study.

In a general way, it was identified that the productions report that the process of infantile hospitalization causes a break in the dynamic of the child and their family, because
they need to adapt to a new environment, as well as to the new schedules, with a restricted social life and breaking the daily activities. At this stressful context, play has been shown as a possible strategy of confrontation used by the child to cope with this situation.

Moreover the play allows the child to use their imagination, memory, perception and creativity, to represent the reality their way. The use of this resource creates conditions for the child to be able to understand and better assimilate what is happening with them. This way, the ludic activities contribute towards a better, calmer and secure clarification of the hospitalization process.

It is evident though, that for a long time play stopped being only an action, to turn a really satisfactory way of investigation in the scientific-academic field. This way, the ludic activities appear as a way of building the research corpus with the infantile audience, because this, through play, is capable of not only entertaining and feeling pleasure, but also to deal with the environment, elaborate events and communicate.

Finally, we highlight the importance of the several areas of knowledge in the recognition and the dissemination of the use of ludic resources during the period of the infantile hospitalization, aiming to enable strategies to the healthy continuity of the childhood development.

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