

The 10 Key Recommendations from the 'Care for the Child' Plan

Ann De Guchtenaere

President Belgian Academy of Paediatrics

info@BAOP.be

Keywords

Child advocacy.

Introduction

Professionals from various child-related sectors support the core principle to *safeguard the children's rights and maximize efforts to ensure children receive opportunities to reach their full potential.*

Recognizing children's complete exclusion from policy-making, the Belgian Academy of Paediatrics (BAOP) -in collaboration with other professionals, paediatric patients and patient representatives- took the initiative to develop this 'Care for the Child'-plan. It offers a comprehensive framework to realize the aforementioned principle, leaving no child behind.

In parallel, and based on the principles of the Plan, 10 recommendations for policymakers have been developed and endorsed by a wide range of child health professionals.

rather than a commitment to quality and outcome-based principles. Consequently, patients in Belgium are at risk to experience unmet needs in health care and health care-related domains of quality of life.

The Plan Care for the Children and Young Persons and the 10 Recommendations are therefore based in every detail on the 'fairness' principle for every child, transcends a disease-oriented approach and is based on two well-known and crucial core principles: Equality and Equity.

The principles of Equality and Equity are pivotal for ensuring quality, sustainable and 'fair' health care, and both principles balance each other. It is this balance that ensures the right health outcomes and a tailored care pathway (1) (Figure 1, Table 1).

Core Principles

All children are entitled to *survival, protection, development and participation.*

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by our country will celebrate its 35th birthday in 2024. The UNCRC is comprehensive (one and indivisible) and protects not only the right of children to preventive, promotive and curative health care. It protects the right of every child to grow to his full potential.

Our country is renowned internationally for its robust and high-quality health care system, employing highly trained and specialized health care professionals who deliver state-of-the-art and innovative care; and yet, despite this reputation, our health care system is characterized by fragmentation, a deficiency in integrated coordination, and an emphasis on performance

Figure 1: Pitfall of discrimination based on for example pathology, age, social situation,...

Every child, regardless of type of care, type of condition and location of care!

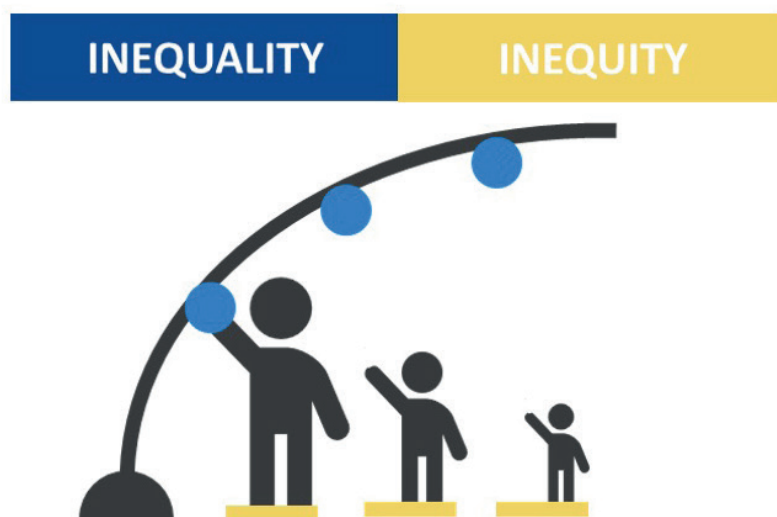


Table 1

EQUALITY	EQUITY
<p>Equality ensures fair and equal-quality, accessible health care for children, regardless of type of illness, type of care, and location of care. Both the UNCRC and the European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH) charter form the core and foundation from which any policy in the care for children initiates and should not deviate.</p> <p>Equality provides a robust structural and equal of quality child health/paediatric care grounded in common core principles.</p>	<p>Equity is about assessing the individual care needs of a child and family, enabling them to achieve the goals of Equality in a way tailored to their unique situation. It emphasizes tailored care with a focus on the unique context of the child. In this sense, Equity represents "context-based practice", serving as a tool for health care professionals to deviate from standards and evidence-based practices.</p> <p>Equity are the specific care paths grafted on the structure and core of Equality.</p>

Figure 2: Equality in de Medical Childcare

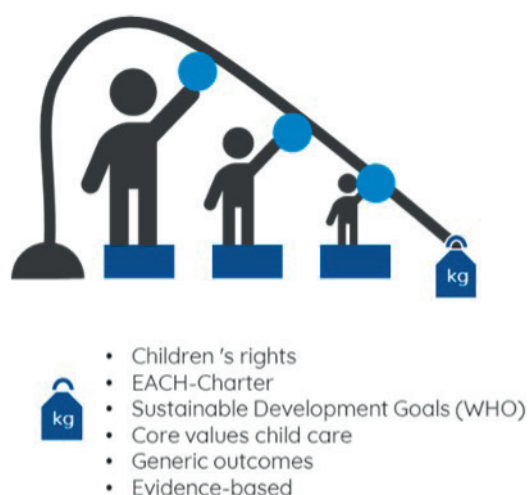
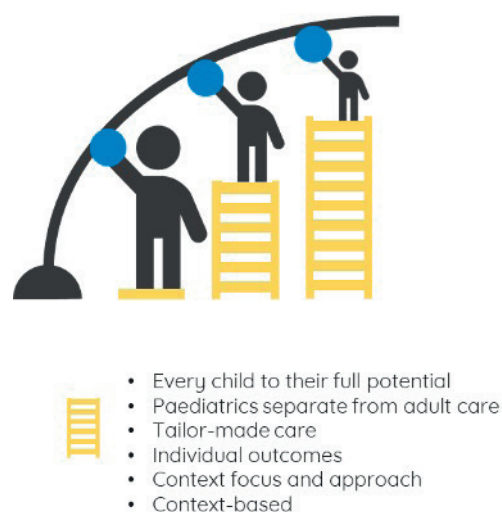


Figure 3: Equity in de Medical Childcare



The 10 Recommendations

1. Base all decisions on children's rights, including within healthcare (EACH charter). Review the Patient Rights Act!
2. Give children, young people, and parents (foster parents, guardians, caregivers, etc.) a structural voice in determining healthcare policies (children's council, etc.).
3. Invest significantly more in all forms of prevention and prioritize prevention on the political agenda.
4. Establish an annual Child Report for Belgium, containing all relevant data on children's health, growth, development and disease (determine this data and all relevant health determinants for children in collaboration with an expert group).
5. Provide short-term incentives for intersectoral collaboration and connection.
6. Ensure a guarantee of quality care for the child through adequate (interprofessional) training on healthy, vulnerable, and sick children, as well as through mandatory child-specific competencies and lifelong learning. Consult children and experts for this. Make these competencies transparent and clearly visible to children, parents and health-care professionals.
7. Acknowledge that (chronically) ill children, children who have a difficult start (such as prematurity) and/or grow up in poverty, are extra vulnerable. Focus on vulnerable children!
8. Value the professionals involved in child healthcare, no longer considering them as an inconvenient appendix to adult care.
9. Establish as soon as possible a structural, Inter-federal expert group and give them a mandate for:
 - Drafting a new care program for paediatrics.
 - Developing a proposal for more preventive and integrated care involving ONE-K&G-Kaleido doctors, CLB and PSE doctors, general practitioners, paediatricians, child- and youth psychiatrists, paediatric nurses, paramedics, etc.
10. Appoint a National Minister for/of the child with coordinating and overarching powers.

Disclaimer

No part of this Recommendations may be reproduced, copied, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means. Either electronically, mechanically or by photocopying, recording or any other means, without the prior written permission of the Belgian Academy of Paediatrics and partners. ©2024

REFERENCE

1. CIFS Health. Equality vs Equity in Healthcare: Both Are Important. Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies.