

Study reveals an absence of consistent standards in children's hospital environments

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The sound, light and temperature levels in paediatric hospital wards often vary, highlighting the lack of consistent environmental standards, according to a new study.

The research is being presented today at the 2015 Sleep and Breathing Conference (16 April, 2015).

Children and parents often suffer [sleep deprivation](#) when the environment on a ward is disruptive, which can affect disease recovery and quality of life in hospitalised children. There are no general consistent recommendations covering sound, light and temperature levels to help guide hospitals across Europe.

Researchers measured these three factors in five paediatric wards in Santa Maria Hospital, Academic Medical Centre of Lisbon for three days at five-minute intervals. They measured levels in wards and hallways and during the day and night, and compared these to different recommended values taken from a variety of sources, including legislation in Portugal and recommended standards of the World Health Organization and the European Commission.

In all wards the intensity of the sound was higher than recommended for 85% of the time evaluated. The temperature was also higher than recommended in the day time and at night. The lighting levels were as recommended for 85% of the time.

The researchers conclude that while some recommended environmental standards for environment in children's wards do exist, they are not consistent and not always implemented.

Rosario Ferreira, an author of the study, commended: "For anyone who has attended hospital with their children, they will know the difficulties that can occur in getting to sleep during what can be a difficult time. It is clear to us that while some rules about the [environment](#) in children's wards do exist, the adherence to them is often poor. On the other hand, hospitals may not even be aware of the rules regarding simple factors such as light, temperature and sound, as there are no consistent guidelines.

"Our findings highlight the need for consistent clinical standards to be developed if we are to improve [children](#)'s quality of life and improve the experience for parents. Some of the excessive noise could be due to patient care and the monitoring of patients but we are sure that much of the noise we observed could be reduced. This is a pilot study that needs to be followed up by more extended work in order to identify specific factors to be modified."

More information: Poster: Environment in paediatric wards: sound, light and temperature, Presentation time: Thursday 16 April 2015 (13.45-14.45)

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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