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Child with Special Needs

Child Health Nursing

Care of physically challenged children, intellectually disabled children, children with sensory impairment, rehabilitation, early intervention and family support.

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CHAPTER 20 / CHILD HEALTH NURSING 20. Child with Special Needs

1. Concepts and classifications

Children with disabilities or additional support needs may experience physical, intellectual, developmental, sensory, communication or multiple impairments. Functional limitations reflect both condition and environmental barriers. Respect individual language preferences and rights to education, health, participation and protection.

2. Assessment and family support

Assess ADLs, mobility, communication, pain, feeding/swallowing, hearing/vision, learning, participation, access, caregiver strain and strengths. Intellectual disability involves deficits in intellectual and adaptive functioning during development; assess conceptual, social and practical skills, not IQ alone. For physical disability support mobility and skin protection; for sensory impairment provide communication aids and accessible environments.

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3. Rehabilitation and early intervention

Team/resource	Role
Physiotherapy	Mobility, balance, positioning, contracture prevention
Occupational therapy	Self-care, sensory/environmental supports, play and school participation
Speech-language services	Communication, AAC and swallowing assessment
Special educator	Individualized learning accommodations
Social work / DEIC	Service linkage, benefits, family support and early intervention

4. Nursing responsibilities

Develop shared functional goals with the child/family, provide safe feeding and medication education, assist equipment fitting and safe transfers with therapists, monitor skin and pain, coordinate respite and follow-up. Prevent isolation through inclusive play and schooling. Use simple accessible communication, ask preferences, avoid restraints for convenience, protect from abuse and neglect. Provide anticipatory guidance on puberty, sexuality and transition to adult care.

5. Example care plan

A child with cerebral palsy and feeding difficulty: assess swallowing and growth, refer to feeding specialist, provide prescribed texture and positioning, teach caregiver aspiration signs and monitor weight. Outcome: safe

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feeding with adequate intake and caregiver confidence, adapted to child's needs.

6. Important Examination Questions

Long Answer Questions

1. 1. Explain rehabilitation and early intervention for children with disabilities.

Short Answer Questions

1. 1. Describe adaptive functioning
2. 2. explain family support
3. 3. discuss inclusive nursing care.

Very Short Answer Questions (with answers)

1. 1. What is AAC? - Augmentative and alternative communication.
2. 2. What is DEIC? - District Early Intervention Centre.

7. Quick Revision

- Function and participation matter.
- Avoid assuming inability from disability.
- Support the entire family.

8. Conclusion

Function and participation matter. Avoid assuming inability from disability. Support the entire family.

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Practice questions

Choose one best answer. The answer key and explanations follow the questions.

1. Which domains must be considered when assessing intellectual disability?

A. IQ alone
B. Intellectual and adaptive functioning
C. Motor strength alone
D. Hearing threshold alone

2. Which service is most directly associated with communication, AAC and swallowing assessment?

A. Physiotherapy
B. Special education alone
C. Speech-language services
D. Social work alone

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3. Which goal best fits inclusive nursing care for a child with additional support needs?

A. Avoiding play and schooling to reduce all risk

B. Using restraints whenever care takes longer

C. Making goals without the child or family

D. Shared functional goals that support participation

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Answer key and explanations

1. B - Intellectual and adaptive functioning

Assessment includes conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills as well as intellectual functioning.

2. C - Speech-language services

Speech-language services address communication and swallowing needs.

3. D - Shared functional goals that support participation

Nursing goals should be shared with the child and family and support function and participation.

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