Books Build Better Brains

Exposure to books and reading enhances school readiness

The University of Wisconsin Pediatric Early Literacy Projects aim to make accessibility to books and the promotion of reading a routine part of health care. While there are many worthy organizations that promote literacy, we feel that this skill is so critical to the academic futures of children (and the overall health of society) that it warrants side-by-side placement with other health and safety advice.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, MPH, MSLIS, MD, Director, of The UW Early Literacy Projects is an advocate for the need for early literacy as a stepping stone to succeeding in life as mentioned in his editorial in a local newspaper. http://host.madison.com/ct/opinion/column/dr-dipesh-navsaria-give-the-gift-of-books-and-literacy/article_9217f5f0-dc39-5dfb-bad2-584051c7009a.html

> 1,386+ inpatient books circulated

Inpatient Reading Library

The Inpatient Reading Library services were recently expanded when the hospital assumed space for a Neonatal Unit Library, located on the 8th floor of American Family Children’s Hospital (AFCH) and an additional 7th floor library. Combined, the three inpatient libraries house more than 1,000 books. The Inpatient Reading Libraries are self-service, continuously-available libraries designed for children from infancy through age 18. It is difficult to ascertain directly, but it is likely that AFCH has one of the few (if not only) regularly-accessible, 24/7 children’s libraries within a pediatric hospital in the country.

Due to the self-service model, it is difficult to accurately track circulation. However, at least 1,386+ books were obviously circulated in 2017 in the 5th floor library alone, and this is likely a major undercount. For an 111-bed hospital with most of the library clients likely coming from the 24 general care beds, this represents, at a minimum, about 1 book per bed per week, with the pace only accelerating.
Books circulated in 2017 include:

Teen – 57 (4%)  
Graphic: 98 (7%)  
Non-fiction: 137 (10%)  
Junior: 209 (15%)  
Elementary: 445 (32%)  
Pre-school: 221 (16%)  
Board books: 219 (16%)

4% of the books were Spanish-language

Testimonials
**(A message left for Dr. Navsaria on his Facebook page)**
"Hello, we met briefly after your Born Learning talk at Sentry World in Stevens Point a couple of weeks ago (I work at the library). I was recently at AFCH with my son, he has a rare lung disease so we have spent some time at the Children’s hospital. I have always appreciated the libraries there and was commenting to a nurse about how well curated the collections were. She mentioned that it was you that started this resource. I wanted to personally thank you, my son and I have read countless books and enjoyed many a snuggle while reading together.
With gratitude,
Cathy"

**(A note from a nurse manager at American Family Children’s Hospital)**
“The inpatient reading library is a very important feature on our unit. Many of our patients are hospitalized for very long lengths of stay - sometimes up to a year. Many of these patients are hospitalized through their first year of life. Others spend many days in the hospital throughout their lives.

The library offers these patients important opportunities for brain growth and development through reading. Having a variety of books available for staff, parents and the children has been beneficial and helps encourage reading in the inpatient units. Reading also provides our patients a chance to escape their hospitalization through creative imagination that takes place when the child is either read to or is reading themselves.

I am so proud to have a reading library on our unit. I am so grateful to have a supportive librarian to work with. I am so happy that our families and patients can actively take part in this wonderful program.”

Laura Ahola MSN RN  
Nurse Manager  
AFCH Pediatric Universal Care Unit

**Growth**
Reach Out and Read (ROR) Wisconsin, the state-level coordinating body for Reach Out and Read, has now reached its 7th anniversary. In the past 7 years, ROR has grown from about 55 ROR sites to 215! Our purpose and mission is becoming well-known throughout the
education, literacy, and pediatric communities in Wisconsin and is now the 7th largest coalition in the country!

Reach Out and Read Wisconsin is generously co-sponsored by AFCH and Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin.

The Coming Year
We look forward to working more closely with the nurse manager, Laura Ahola, at American Family Children’s Hospital who anticipates working with our Early Literacy Projects librarian to organize a book club and blog. There is interest in setting up “reading trackers” on the floor and a recognition system which easily identifies progress of readers. In addition, there are plans to implement library cards in one or more libraries within the hospital. We are excited about the ideas presented by Laura as we continuously look for ways to upgrade the reading libraries and make them a fun and stimulating place to visit.

The generous grant support of the Ira and Ineva Reilly Baldwin Wisconsin Idea Endowment has supported us from the inception until 2013 when the grant fund was depleted. The Inpatient Reading Library is currently funded by the American Girl Fund for Children, and grants from the Friends of University Hospital and Clinics, for which we are most grateful.

Additionally, we appreciate the numerous small donations made by community members, families and others who are surprised and delighted by our programs.

Early Literacy Programs Staff
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Director
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Nan Peterson, RN, MS
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Wendy Hellwig
Student Coordinator Emeritus, School of Library and Information Studies
Prescription for Reading

Name: ______________________________________
Date: ___________________ Age: ___________

Rx  Read Books
☐ Every night at bedtime
☐ For ____ minutes every day
☐ As needed

Refills: as requested at local public library

Signature: ______________________________________

Dipesh Navsaria, MPH, MSLIS, MD
Pediatrician & Occasional Children’s Librarian

Families: Please visit reading.pediatrics.wisc.edu for more information on the joy of sharing books together and how it can make a huge difference in your child’s life.

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