I Don't Mind: Children's Attitude towards their Peers with Asthma in Primary Schools

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Abstract

Peer attitudes towards children with asthma can significantly impact on their self-confidence and, hence, their social acceptance. It can be difficult for children with asthma to spend their time in class with peers who do not understand their situation and physical limitations. This paper investigated the attitudes of peers towards children with asthma, and explored factors affecting their attitude scores. A literature search failed to locate any instrument that measured the attitudes of school-aged children towards peers with asthma. Therefore, a new scale was developed by generating a list of items based on existing attitude measures; confirming the content validity by an expert panel; and pre-testing the scale with three primary school children. The main study invited children to complete an asthma knowledge test and the attitudes scale as a class activity. A convenience sample of 545 children without asthma from 16 primary schools participated in the study, of which 507 children completed the attitude towards children with asthma scale. Responses were coded and entered into SPSS 17.0 software for analyses. Approximately 80 per cent of children scored 8/10 or more on the test, suggesting a highly positive attitude expressed by children towards their peers with asthma. Two factors affected the attitude scores – being a female, and having higher asthma knowledge score. The study provided information about the proportion of children who have positive attitudes towards peers with asthma and the factors that affected their scores. The investigation led to the development of the Peer Attitudes toward Children with Asthma (PACA) scale.