


## Effects of Chronic Diseases in Children in School Period and Management at School

### Okul Dönemindeki Çocuklarda Kronik Hastalıkların Etkileri ve Okulda Yönetimi

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#### ABSTRACT

Chronic diseases are a process that adversely affects individuals from all segments of society physically, mentally and socially. This negative effect affects individuals in childhood and adolescence much more deeply due to the life stages they are in. These effects may occur in the form of situations such as interruption of school attendance or decrease in academic success as well as affecting the social life of the child. This situation increases the importance of school health activities. School health activities are generally defined as all the activities carried out to evaluate and improve the health of students, to ensure and maintain a healthy school life, and to provide health education to students and thus to the society. In this context, it shows that school management and all relevant teachers should have knowledge about the evaluation of students' physical and mental health and intervention when necessary. In our study, a summary of the literature on the activities of school management and teachers on this subject is presented.

**Keywords:** Child, Adolescent, Chronic Disease, School.

#### ÖZET

Kronik hastalıklar bugün toplumun her kesiminden bireyi fiziksel, ruhsal ve sosyal yönden olumsuz etkileyen bir süreçtir. Bu olumsuz etki özellikle çocukluk ve ergenlik dönemindeki bireyleri, içinde buldukları yaşam dönemlerinden dolayı çok daha derinden etkilemektedir. Bu etkiler, çocuğun sosyal yaşamının etkilenmesinin yanı sıra okula devam etmesinin sekteye uğraması veya akademik başarısının düşmesi gibi durumlar şeklinde ortaya çıkabilmektedir. Bu durum okul sağlığı faaliyetlerinin önemi arttırmaktadır. Okul sağlığı faaliyetleri genel olarak, öğrencilerin sağlığının değerlendirilmesi, geliştirilmesi, sağlıklı okul yaşamının sağlanması ve sürdürülmesi, öğrenciye ve dolayısıyla topluma sağlık eğitiminin verilmesi için yapılan çalışmaların tümü olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda okul yönetiminin ve ilgili tüm öğretmenlerin, öğrencilerin fiziksel ve ruhsal sağlıklarının değerlendirilmesi ve gerekli durumlarda müdahalesi konusunda bilgi sahibi olmaları gerekliliğini göstermektedir. Çalışmamızda, okul yönetimi ve öğretmenlerin bu konuyla ilgili faaliyetlerine yönelik bir literatür özeti sunulmaktadır.

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## Introduction

Chronic diseases are disorders that continue for life, progress in a way that may be fatal, and cause physical and/or mental dysfunctions (1). Today, the population of children and adults with chronic diseases is increasing and chronic diseases constitute the most important health problem in the world and in all industrialised countries (1-3). This problem may occur at the time of birth of the individual or it may occur in childhood or adulthood, that is, in any period of life. In various studies, it is known that the incidence of chronic diseases in children under the age of 18 is between 10-15% in the world. If children with mental, sensory, learning and behavioural problems are included, the incidence can increase to 30-40% (1).

These serious statistics draw attention to the fact that this is an important issue that needs to be studied. For this reason, new developments in the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of chronic diseases are being achieved every day. In fact, these developments have made significant contributions to the school attendance of children with chronic diseases (4-6).

As a period of life, school age is a period starting from the age of 6-7 and continuing until the end of higher education, i.e. until the age of 24, when the child leaves his/her family, opens up to the whole world and becomes socialised (7).

In this period, children acquire the values, knowledge and a series of social skills that will contribute to their adaptation to society at school. For this reason, children entering an environment different from the family environment for the first time, being in a physically, mentally and socially active period, changing and developing their body structures and encountering various difficulties in this period may cause them to face risks that may negatively affect their health. All these make it necessary to consider them as a special group among other groups (8-10). The inclusion of the chronic disease factor in this special period, which is present in some children, will mean that the problems that the child has to cope with will increase.

Chronic diseases are processes that can cause various psychological and social problems that affect the quality of life of the child. Facing an illness or other traumatic processes, experiencing restrictions and obstacles during the period when the child begins to adapt to social life can negatively affect school and friend relationships or plans for the future (11,12). In this period, any physical inadequacy that would characterise the child as different may affect his/her feelings of belonging to a group or cause exclusion (12). This exclusion may increase exponentially, especially in the case of a mental illness (13,14).

Most children with chronic illness try to hide their symptoms due to the disease by avoiding social relationships, especially with their friends, due to reasons such as embarrassment and thinking that they will not be accepted (1,13). As this hiding continues, their sense of belonging to the group will decrease; feelings/behaviours of loneliness and social isolation will increase. For this reason, it is of great importance for children to be with their peers and participate in their activities for their health (1,12).

Chronic illness can also have negative effects on children's school success. The fact that many children go to the doctor in certain periods due to their illnesses or get sick due to their problems causes them to fall behind in school and lessons. School absenteeism resulting from these situations will also harm the child's academic success (9,15). For this reason, school-teachers and administration should take serious responsibility for the integration of children with chronic diseases into school and life.

## Management of Chronic Diseases at School

Children with chronic diseases (epilepsy, diabetes, asthma, eczema, etc.) need the help of their teachers, especially in coping with the social and academic difficulties they experience at school (1). The most important reason for teachers to be the person to meet this support need is that they are in direct contact with the child (9). However, teachers may not always have the knowledge to fulfil this need. As a matter of fact, various studies indicate that teachers who teach children with chronic diseases such as epilepsy, diabetes and asthma lack knowledge about intervention for such chronic diseases and draw attention to the necessity of training for teachers (15-17).

School health is defined as all the studies carried out to evaluate and improve the health of students and school staff, to ensure and maintain a healthy school life, and to provide health education to students and thus to the society (18).

School health services are studies carried out to evaluate and improve the health of students, to ensure and maintain a healthy school life, and to provide health education to students, school and thus society (18). School health services are very important in terms of providing access to children who cannot benefit from health services, especially in societies where socio-economic differences are significant (19).

It is stated that a team consisting of physicians, psychologists, counsellors (psychological counsellors), nurses, social workers, classroom teachers and parents should be formed for the effective implementation, implementation and monitoring of school health services (20,21). This team should prepare a programme for school health services to work more effectively. The activities in the school health services programme are generally (20);

- school health services,
- school education,
- school environmental health,
- the physical structure of the school,
- school health and nutrition services,
- psychological counselling and guidance services.

In order to provide health services in schools, it is necessary to carry out health screenings, to ask for help from health institutions about children's diseases and to give the necessary information to the families by a health specialist at PTA meetings. (22). These services should be carried out by a family health centre in line with the arrangements to be made and the needs to be determined by the teachers in the school.

In this context, the school health services programme is generally expressed as a three-dimensional service as developmental, curative and rehabilitative (20). The team that carries out this programme consists of class teachers, counsellors and parents in schools in our country. In school health services, the primary task of the counsellor and class teacher is to ensure that students develop health behaviours such as body cleaning, nutrition and ways of protection against infectious diseases. In addition, within the scope of school health services, the development of students is observed and recorded. Guidance counsellors and classroom teachers are obliged to share this recorded information and observations with the relevant persons (23).

In this context, regardless of the level of education, teachers should have developed knowledge and skills in terms of determining the health needs of students (especially those with chronic diseases) and making interventions. For this reason, it is of great importance to organise training

programmes or in-service trainings to increase the knowledge and skills of teachers on the subject.

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