



## KEY POINT SUMMARY

### OBJECTIVES

This study sought to understand how children experience their stay in the hospital and the impact of the environment in these experiences through children who were newly hospitalized in two Norwegian pediatric hospital wards with a diagnosis of type 1 diabetes.

### DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

This study suggests that a pediatric hospital environment that is child friendly and supports the presence of parents is needed to create a more homelike environment. This research also suggests the need for designing an environment that supports opportunities for parents and children to be actively involved in the treatment process and facilitates the adaptation of new habits associated with living with a chronic illness.

## Being Hospitalized With a Newly-Diagnosed Chronic Illness – A Phenomenological Study of Children’s Lifeworld in the Hospital

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### Key Concepts/Context

Research regarding children within the hospital environment has typically been investigated using adult insight into the needs and preferences of children. However, current research has begun to use the child’s perspective to gain understanding on how the quality of the hospital environment influences the child’s experiences when facing an illness that requires hospitalization.

### Methods

A total of nine children between the ages of 6 and 12, who were hospitalized from October 2008 to February 2010 due to a new diagnosis of type 1 diabetes, were studied in two Norwegian hospitals that each contained similar children’s wards. To gain insight into the children’s lived experience, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was taken using close observation, in-depth interviews, and photo-voice. Insights gained through observation and photo-voice were used as the basis of the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and thematically coded. From the data, two main themes emerged along with several subthemes.

### Findings

This research revealed that children experience the change associated with the diagnosis of a chronic condition that requires hospitalization through recognition and adaptation. This study suggests that physical changes in the body associated with a new diagnosis greatly impact how a child inhabits their hospital room and associates their experiences within the hospital environment. Access to private



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space, a “child friendly” atmosphere, and the ability to keep close contact with parents help to increase familiarity (recognition) and create a more homelike environment. Opportunities during hospitalization for both children and parents to be involved in the treatment process and implement new habits needed to live with a lifelong diagnosis help facilitate adaptation to the child’s new life.

### Limitations

One limitation to this study would be that it only focused on children with a chronic illness that were newly diagnosed. The amount of actual time spent in the hospital greatly varied among the children. Other limiting factors of this study are the small sample size and the limited findings generated through observation and photographic collection.