Croatia: Positive communication and engaged parenting - prevention of institutionalization of children with disabilities

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Parent's right to information

- Health Care Act
- Law on the Protecion of Patients’ Rights
- Medical Practice Act
- Code of Medical Ethics and Deontology
Enhancing the communication skills of healthcare providers

**STATUS**
- Medical facts
- Accurate information
- Incomplete information
- Inappropriate way of communication
- Inappropriate place and time
- Parents under stress, often with a sense of guilt

**GOAL**
- Medical facts
- Accurate information
- More complete information
- Communication in an understandable manner for parent
- In a separate room, and not in the hallway
- Engaged parent
Positive communication

- Ministry of Health - Project "Kindness is the beginning of each treatment" - Communication skills training for health care professionals

- UNICEF in cooperation with MoH delivered trainings *How to tell unwanted news?* - education on effective communication between health professionals and parents of children with disabilities, including health care workers in ALL maternity hospitals at the state and local level

- Faculty of Medicine introduced academic course: Basic Medical Skills with university textbook: "How to tell unwanted news?"
Positive communication
"How to tell unwanted news in a good way?"

- First contact is the most important
- Positive approach and support to parents
- Appropriate and carefully chosen words without highly technical terms
- Give as much information as possible about positive sides of the child’s development
- Provide information on support public services and social rights
- Provide information on nongovernmental organisations in the area
‘Creating’ an engaged parent takes involvement of a multidisciplinary professional team: paediatrician, physiatrist, physiotherapist, rehabilitator, social worker, psychologist and other professionals as needed.

Parental involvement is extremely important in process of early intervention.
Engaging parents in process of early intervention
Engaged Parent – Best Practice Model

Centre for rehabilitation - Down Syndrom Centre Pula
Programme is implemented in line with the European Down Syndrom Association guidelines:

- aiming at inclusion and prevention of institutionalisation of children with Down Syndrom
- multidisciplinary approach
- individual plans prepared for each child, with active involvement of parents
- in line with needs and chronological age of a child
- implemented throughout a year
There is always a way to communicate!

If not by words, then by signs.
Conclusions:

Prevention of institutionalisation of children with disabilities lies in:

- Positive attitudes and communication of professionals
- Supporting engaged parenting
- Developing public community services for parents and families
- Enhancing the role of parental associations
- Destigmatisation and increased public awareness on challenges, needs and rights of children with disabilities
Thank you!