

Emergency Department Services for Children in the Republic of Ireland

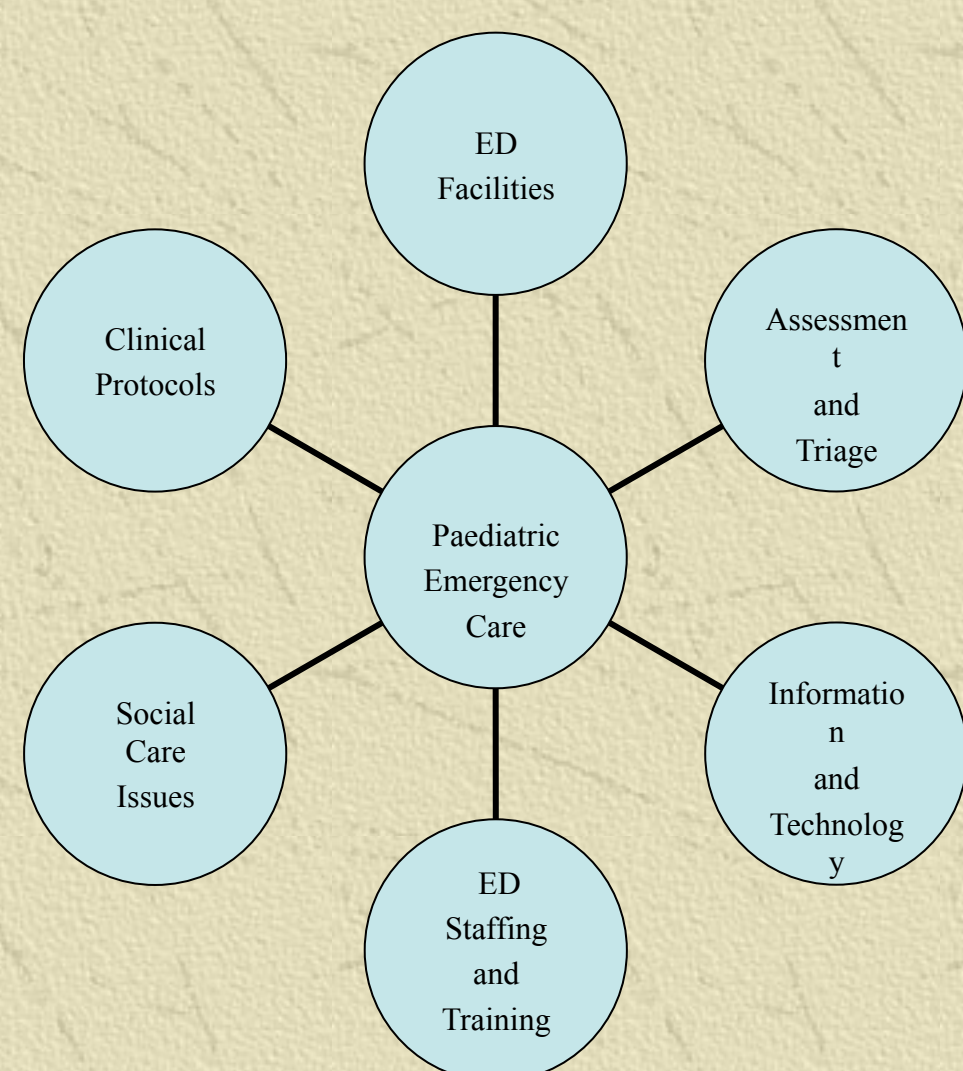
K. McHugh, H. Cummins, A. Ibrahim, K. Cunningham

Children comprise an estimated 25% of Emergency Department attendances in the Republic of Ireland. There are no national guidelines for the provision of emergency services for children.

Methods

A structured questionnaire was sent to Emergency Medicine Consultants or Hospital Managers in the 37 acute hospitals in the Republic of Ireland in mid-2007.

It addressed 6 elements central to the care of children.



There were Clinical Information systems in 14 of the 35 hospitals who responded.

ED Facilities



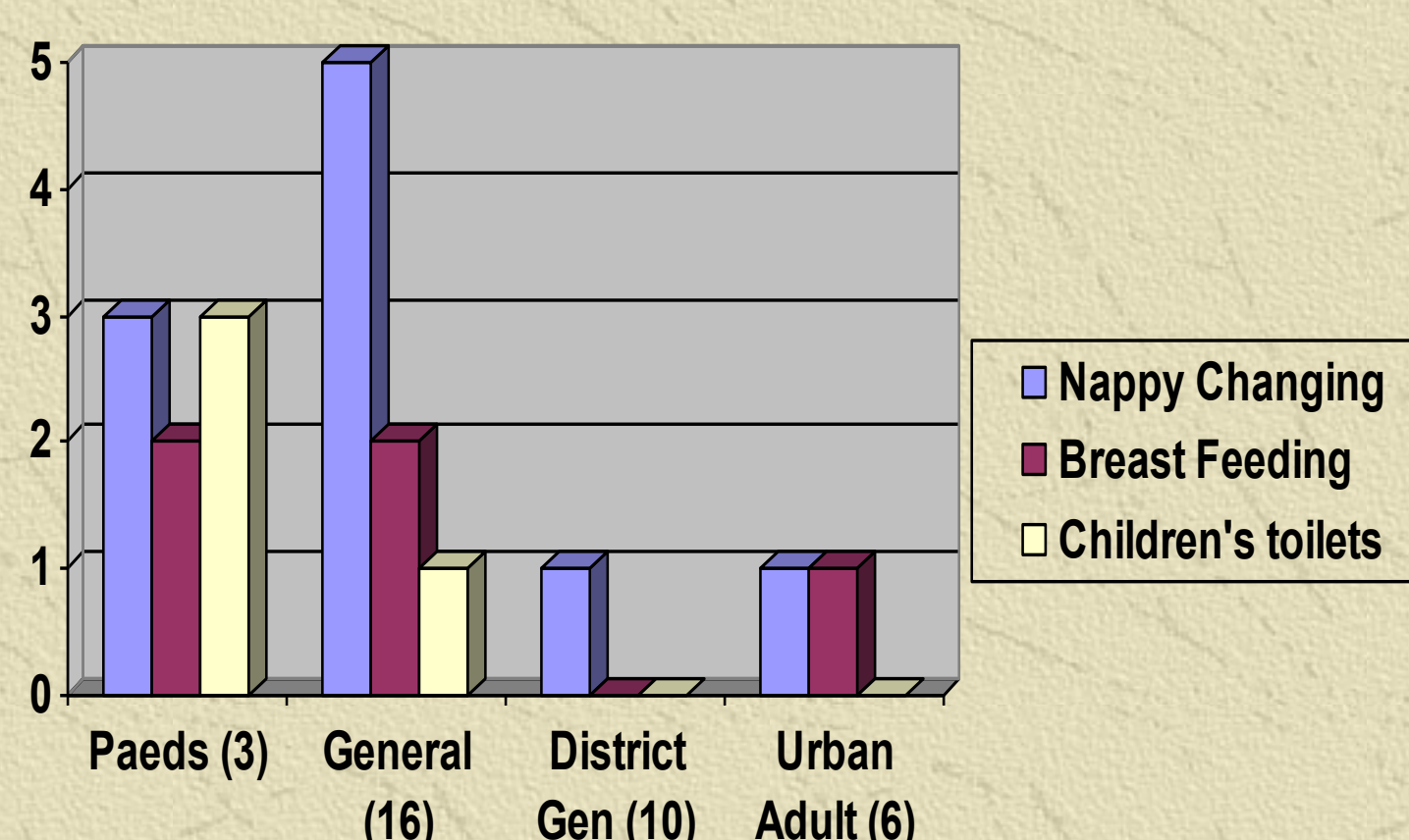
There are three dedicated Paediatric Hospitals in the greater Dublin area and therefore these provide specific paediatric waiting rooms, treatment rooms and resuscitation bays.

Excepting the paediatric hospitals only 7 hospital EDs have close access to nappy changing facilities and only 3 to breast feeding facilities.

Of the General Hospitals only 32% have a separate paediatric treatment room and only 11% have separate waiting areas.

There are age appropriate toys in only 8 emergency departments in total.

Only one Paediatric Emergency Department has a play specialist.



Triage and Assessment

At two hospitals there was no Triage system. Most hospitals use Manchester Triage system which can cater for adults and children.

Seven Emergency Departments do not score pain in children.

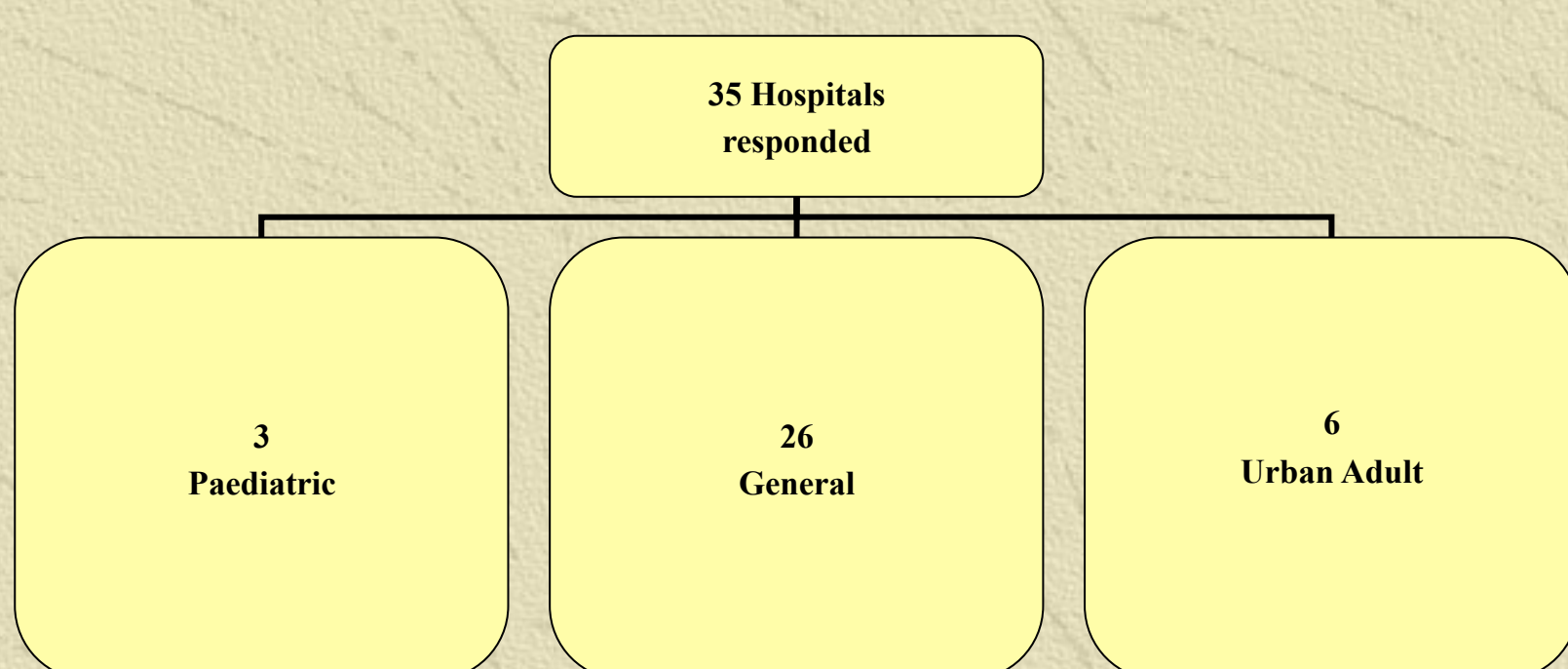
The Wong Baker Faces scale was the pain assessment tool used in the majority of hospitals who scored pain.

Social Care

Social Care Issues	No. of Hospitals
Child Protection Plan agreed between Social work and Paediatrics	18
Screening tool to identify children with child welfare issues	3
Emergency department access to a Child Protection Register	0
Child Protection training included in NCHD training programme	15
Access to Social Work Support outside of Mon-Fri 9 to 5	5

Results

Questionnaires were returned for 35 out of 37 hospitals.



Conclusions

Despite the recent prosperity in Ireland, there are unacceptable variations in the quality of care available to children at acute hospitals.

There is evidence of inadequate facilities, under-resourcing and variability in clinical care

The recommendations from the *Services for Children in Emergency Departments* from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (April 2007) should be adopted immediately to provide an acceptable level of emergency care for children in the Republic of Ireland