



## ***THE PROGRAMME FIELDS***

**8. Sports and culture for children, too**

**9. Children's leisure time and recreation**

**10. Support and help for parents in their care and education of children**

**3/3**



## **PARTICIPANTS OF THE ACTION**

**Organization of the action should welcome both individual and joint activities by:**

- **expert institutions working with children**
- **local administration and self-management**
- **children's institutions**
- **civilian associations**
- **sponsors, donators**
- **parents**
- **children and their activities**



## ***METODOLOGY AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME***

*1/3*

- Application for participation in the action, submitted by the town or district government, should be sent to the Central Coordinating Committee
- Forming of Town/District Coordinating Committee
- Construction of operational plan



## ***METODOLOGY AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME***

*2/3*

- Self-evaluation
- Annual reports to Central Coordinating Committee
- Realization *at least 80%* of programme's criteria



Ø Prize-awarding committee



## METODOLOGY AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

3/3

Evaluation is based on qualitative and quantitative parameters.

Award presentation ceremony Ć  
honorary title

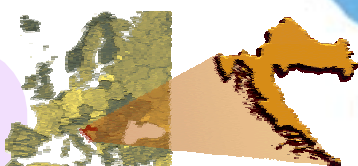
*Town/District – friend of children*



E10

WORKSHOP X

## CROATIAN TOWNS AND DISTRICTS PARTICIPANTS IN PROGRAMME "TOWNS AND DISTRICTS – FRIENDS OF CHILDREN"



E10

WORKSHOP X



This board at the entrance of town/district will clearly declare that one's entering an urban environment worth having this honorary title *friends of children.*



This program has been presented on **Twenty-seventh special session of United Nations General Assembly** (*World summit about children*), **in New York, May 8-10th 2002.**

## Smile! The spirit of play

E10

WORKSHOP X

There are many different ways to take care of ill children: feeding and washing them, giving them medications, and doing all this in a lovely way. The hospital can also offer children the opportunity of having toys and a place where to play and, even better, it can provide skilled professionals helping children express their fantasies and use their resources.

Besides educators, teachers, and psychologists, we work with clowns called “Doctors Sogni”, members of the “Theodora Foundation”. They are a group of artists working for the well-being of the patient, acting as mediators between fantasies and reality, in agreement with other health carers. Their work allows a less traumatic shift between the two different worlds that are life inside and outside the hospital. Above all, they speak alternative languages that cross any cultural and linguistic barrier. Thanks to the universal “spirit of play” and of smile, Greek, Arab or Russian children are able to recognize a clown even if he does not wear a national mask or does not speak their language. Only adults need to know if these people are true doctors or not, because children feel that these “Doctors Sogni” do not scare nor hurt them. The children play with them and trust them, and through them they gradually learn to believe in the other less funny and less lovely doctors.

Elio Berti “Dr Baciccia”, Simona Gambero “Dr Piperita”, Massimo Ivaldo “Dr Nasello”, Antonio Pannella “Dr Peloso”, Paolo Piano “Dr Boh”, Erica Rosso “Dr Irina Pirina” and Enrico Vezzelli “Dr Stropiccio” have been working at Gaslini Children’s Hospital for more than four years, at Spedali Riuniti in Livorno and at Ospedale S. Paolo in Savona for more than two. In such a long time, they met face to face hundreds of children (and of parents, doctors, and nurses...).

We cannot use science words to explain how they can get a child’s smile (sometimes tears are useful, too...), because the clowns cannot simply be described as “materials and methods” even though they offer themselves as “materials and methods”. Behind their “red nose”, they are able to use their imagination, intuitiveness, and courage to play with pain, fear, and death. This kind of work, eliciting an alternative temporary reality, cannot undergo any statistical evaluation.

Traditional doctors describe emotions only as diseases or as aspects characterizing diseases: anxiety, depression and despair. We have rating scales for what is “wrong” but we have nothing to measure serenity, joy, and hope; we are satisfied simply when we can say: “the patient does not suffer”.

Of course, it is probably more scientific to say that these clowns learn physiology, pathology, psychology, sanitary regulations, legal medicine, and communication. Their education includes monthly medical and psychological supervision meetings.

Under clown direction, a parent can become a “hatstand” on which the child can put his troubles and a child usually crying during a medical visit can stop doing it the next time. To explain what happens we should turn to Psychiatry, Sociology, and Etno-Medicine. The most important thing for us to know is that the child’s fears have become a smile.

And, as you are so curious, let them tell us how they do it!

Antonio:

“I walk along the corridor and I hear tears and cries coming out of a room: the child is 2 years old and is surrounded. Doctor, nurse, daddy and himself: he has to undergo sampling and he is afraid. He cries. I know I must make him feel it is right to be afraid as it is the only

way to reassure him. I am afraid, too, I am afraid when I go into a hospital, every time. I look and see an entangled bundle of people and of energy, I need to make my way with discretion, walking tiptoe, and I think about bubbles, messengers that relieve, and I enter with them, and become visible, and time is suspended. Even the child is suspended, he is detached from his own fear...so there is someone accompanying him! Thanks to the musical box, sampling is done and the thermometer does not hurt, I promise and show it. He smiles and takes his temperature. While I am about it, I care for daddy, too, I comfort him about his feeling of impotence before his child's pain. And the doctor? She is far from feeling happy that her hand seemed bad, it can be a kind hand, very kind, a hand that needs to be shaken to let the others know and we all shake it, to make peace, since shaking hands is a "healthy" daily thing, which gives another opportunity to everybody."

To Antonio, wearing the clown-doctor's overall means taking off the mask of normality, a mask which imposes silence to emotions and feelings. A make-up that makes us naked, natural and spontaneous, since we are so used to cover ourselves, to avoid being involved, that we no longer let us be naked, and we need to be dressed as "naked", and we must ask permission to form-formality to find again ourselves and the others.

We are told about this also by

Massimo

"It is Wednesday, Ludovica is hospitalized today. We change our clothes together in the filter room, I take off my clothes to put on other clothes, as even clothes identify the doctor, and for this reason she puts on her pyjamas reluctantly, as the pyjamas identifies the patient. I think she is 2 years old, she does not speak much but is annoyed, it is clear. I smile at her. I tell her I will try to spruce myself up for her and I will come back to see her. And, if she wants, I will let her see all the things I am putting in my pockets. Goodness knows what my words mean to her. "Bye, mummy, bye granny, see you later...", I say goodbye to them too. I go into the room after half an hour. She is already in bed, lost, like me. Mummy has remained there, granny has gone out. Then they will take turns. The room is a new thing. Maybe we can visit it. There is this one, that one. We can put things in a mess or in the right place. This thing here, that one there. This is soft, this is cold. This yes, this no. She mainly says "NO". I look at her, she looks at me. After some minutes, I go out.

One hour later, the nurse calls me and says: "we are going to put a dressing. Can you distract her attention with bubbles?". The doctor puts the dressing, the clown-doctor blows bubbles. Ludovica's attention is sometimes distracted when looking at granny bursting bubbles.

It is Wednesday again. In the room there is granny and two psychologists. Now even the clown-doctors... that's all we need! Ludovica opens her eyes wide, the psychologist invites us in. Being in company is OK, but too many people would annoy me... "I wanted to let my colleague see how you work", the psychologist tells us subsequently. Oh, then, if that is the case!

We introduce ourselves to each other, we shake hands and invite Ludovica to do the same: a good opportunity to display one of her "NOs". Augusta comes out of my pocket and the psychologists feel they are in the way and go out. Augusta, my lobster, red, maybe shy as Ludovica. Will they be willing to know each other? It seems so. Ludovica smiles for the first time and strokes it with her hand. Augusta reciprocates. It gets near, offers its hand, legs (four) like Ludovica. Then it plays hide-and-seek but the youngest in the room, shaking the handkerchief, finds it. Augusta likes it.

Bubbles. A ritual of clown-doctors, a pleasant greeting sometimes. Other times, when they come onto your face, a nuisance. Other NOs from Ludovica. Fortunately, Augusta understands, intervenes and



eats the bubbles. Now it has a full belly, is tired, and goes to sleep. Would you kiss it goodnight? Ludovica kisses it twice. What about making a bee? A small bee, bee-ing just born? It wants to kiss, too, but she is not able to do it... Ludovica teaches it... and the bee flies from her hands, from her mouth, and kisses us, too.

See you soon, Ludovica. Ciao. Rather ... (a blown kiss)"

The hands, legs, kisses, words, and NOs that at 2 years of age mean so many things, are a question rather than an answer. They just seem a refusal to those who feel guilty, to those who know that it is easier to go away "justified" by those NOs rather than to accept them also for the invitation they hide. And when the invitation is manifest, it is necessary to be even more prepared.

Paolo:

"Doctor Boooooh!"

"Doctor BoooooooooH! Doctor BoooooOOOOOoooooHHHh!!!!

She called me this way, the volume and length of her shout growing progressively and, coming out of the room, filling the corridors of the Hematology ward. Then she arrived running, always barefoot. Tiny and unrestrainable, dragging her i.v. unit and everything. And we played, and played, and played.

She was 4 and was enchanted by everything. Her mother looked in a sly way, as often do Rom people, without participating directly. A second mother, her older sister (as old as myself), was there, loving and caring, participating in our game, guiding the small child and myself (quite out of place!) towards some goal. The toy she liked best was a small white mouse made of cloth, the same size as my forefinger. Its name was Gigi and, when on my finger, it got lively for those who wanted to believe it; and she, resolute, believed it.

The small child was vital and enthusiastic but the disease progressed leaving very little room for hope. One day her battle shout did not come, the head nurse told us we were only waiting for an end. We went to greet her and we were welcomed into the room, as always. She was in bed, barefoot as usual, but she seemed even smaller while sleeping the sleep of morphine. We did not play that day, we never played again. I left Gigi near her.

The older sister asked us not to forget her, and that is one of the few promises I kept in my life."

When one learns to respond, it is forever. This kind of promises are repeated with every child, every sister and every mother. In each of these reports, the relatives, either present or absent from the scene, observe, mediate, ask. All of them obtain a response, even when they seem to be excluded.

Enrico:

"The appointment is at 9.30, in the oval room: as usual, we arrive in groups, according to our rhythms and moods; we change our clothes, put on our uniform and make-up. After preparing bags and tools, we swarm up and down the stairs loudly to the Nephrology Department, the head nurse gives us instructions and I, as Doctor Stropiccio, plunge into the day. I made for the rooms we assigned ourselves, determined, to respect the work of the ward staff, not to create the confusion in the corridor that our presence causes.

The corridor appears very long, I am sleepy and hungry (typical disease due to work start), the excited children lace my shoes (but one with the other!) and search my pockets, one of them wants to be helped to pee into the box, the farthest mothers sponsor their rooms with winking but pretentious smiles, nurses and doctors make cluster quips (I ask myself: why didn't I pretend to be ill today?), above all this mess, the shout of a child, my attention is turned to the sampling room but the door is

open and the room is empty. Shouts come out of room 7, I knock on the door without thinking, still full of the high spirits of the others.

I open the door, look inside and I am wrapped by the sign language of a mother who, waving her arms like a traffic policeman, addresses me reassuring signs; my impression is to be in front of a bilingual mason-mother who, while inviting me in verbally, builds with her hands a wall of embarrassment, tiredness, desire to return home.

I remain blocked at the door handle as at the railing of a ship, observing the mother who, stroke after stroke, swims towards me, then, in an informal way, translation is provided: "you know, my daughter behaves like this every time she has to take a medicine". My ears perceive something, but my eyes and thoughts wander through restless hands and the small whirling child who throws herself loudly into the bathroom, leaving the door half-open.

I leave the handle and with a dance of smiles I invert our positions: now the mother and her wall are out of the door and I find myself accidentally on the threshold and, introducing to her Pippo, my white rabbit, I realize the advantage ... and then... my rabbit runs away from me, the undisciplined Pippo! He goes in and I run after him, look for him, he slips under the bed, jumps on the wardrobe, I hear comments and laughs, then the animal slips into the bathroom, jumps on the water-closet and slips into the shower box.

Her eyes are wide and, between pursuit and play, I can see the child rolled up behind the door in a little short pyjamas. Her head plunged on her knees, she stands up, she is not crying, she is only soaked in an angry game, pushed by the will and dignity of someone who wants to be heard.

Her eyes are wide and see me. She cannot help smiling, her game loosens and my embarrassment is clear, I tell her I am sorry and I hurry up towards the door but Pippo jumps on her shoulder, I take him back but she calls him, strokes him and asks me about him, we stay close together talking, sitting on the floor, happy. Hurrah! For the toilet, a protected place... for deep meditation."

The anger of a child is a winding and unwinding whirl. But the road of anger and closure, in the absence of different options, such as adults laughing with the child and not at him, adults apologizing for their mistakes, becomes for a child the one-way street he will follow as an adult. As all adults who are not able to play nor to lose.

Elio:

"I had this dream with my friend Jo.

Jo did not talk much but had wide eyes, or rather, many eyes.

He wanted to learn the rules and then to try to fight.

And it was in a cold winter morning that Jo waited for me for the great challenge. He was ready for the duel with Doctor Baciccia.

A challenge which did not have an end since I was afraid to win and I always chose to lose before starting. For this reason, we shot the red handkerchief everywhere, inside the chair, the mattress, the wardrobe, the pillow, everywhere... but never against us... and Jo was very skilful, had learnt well but, now that I am thinking about it, he did not care for the duel, either, but he cared for the challenge. Jo fought like a lion an endless battle, he never gave up.

I like to remember him like this since I see and feel him like this.

Jo is still there, fighting, and I am still happy to lose."

If you want to dream, a handkerchief is an ideal object, fluid, malleable, it can be tightened in a knot and becomes a ball, a bullet, you throw it and it brings you far away. But when it opens, it falls lightly like a parachute, a basket of dreams with its belly up.



Simona:

“Here it is, I got it!

We grasped a breath.

We grasped a breath: its shape is that of a blue handkerchief appearing in my hand. What is it? Maybe a thought, I don’t know. Is it good? Is it bad? It is a little creased, maybe it feels like having a walk... but where?

Leo is willing and open to play: we have known each other for some time, we have measured each other and now we let us be carried away. The answer is immediate:

- to my farm!
- Have you a farm? – I ask Leo and his mother

She says:

- When he grows up, Leo wants to have a beautiful farm!
- With horses and cows!
- And hens?
- Yes!
- And also Ualla, our dog! – says the mother

And also, and also..... and also....

We blew the handkerchief away, to that beautiful farm.

That meeting was a gift for me, I just played with them, nothing more. Nonetheless, when I left the room...

I only wanted to shut me up in the kitchen of the ward and not to go out.

To stop disease course, the therapy was suspended and substituted with a waiting attitude. Doctors, parents, and also Leo knew this. He knew this, too, because his body knew.

In occasion of the meeting with Daniela, I told her about Leo, asking what had happened, how I could play ‘what will I do when I grow up’ with a child who will never grow up.

- Why not? – she answered – he was great in that game, in his farm.

I think that imagination nourishes our lives as much as drinking and eating. And I think that imagined reality is as real as the one we call true reality – really true. And I know I open room doors to open other doors.”

Doors and keys opening doors, of a future that can only be imagined, but for a child his imagination is so magical that nobody will ever rob him of his possible futures, futures which would have become real if death had not taken him. Even death cannot do it, since by now he has conceived and interpreted his futures, there is no need to have years, people, things filling the sequence that will stop, it is sufficient to jump and be a juggler of the mind.

Erica:

“...we do not speak the same language...  
it seems we cannot understand each other...  
words, how important...  
there is no need to use words...  
it’s wonderful not to need words!....

However, oranges today have plenty of things to say. As oranges say things, without words. Today, instead of being simple fruit, they have decided to learn to fly. Obviously, the way oranges can fly.

They are not juggler’s balls, but it is immediately the “Circo”... Circus....no?....Circo! Play..., OK,

I draw the big top, the Circo.... Oh, the Circus! That's what I said! ... well said, Russian daddy, confirming me that the Circus is the Circus. Now we are three jugglers, we jump, we dance. The way you move, you seem you want to tell me something else... you like martial arts! Even Bruce Lee was a good juggler.

But you are not aggressive! You know how to say you are sorry...

Even though we do not speak the same language - you are learning to move...

Now it is nice to know how to say goodbye...

Ciao... se you next time!"

Ciao... se you next time.