



2021 ANNA NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

The Benefits on Quality of Life for Children with a Transplant Attending a Specialty Camp

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Problem/Purpose: Children with end stage organ failure (ESOF) require complex disease care and education regarding their allograft function and achieve a high quality of life (QoL). We began a camp to help provide an integrated approach to enhance their emotional, physical, and psychological wellbeing, and a chance to attend camp when that is often not otherwise possible. Children with ESOF are often isolated from their peers for a variety of reasons and often are depressed, developmentally delayed, are depressed, and lack self-confidence. Young adults tend to have a higher degree of allograft graft loss as they become more independent and begin college or live on their own. There are only a few camps in the US dedicated to transplant recipients. Camp BRIDGES is a camp specifically for pediatric renal, liver and heart transplant recipients up to age 25.

Approach: Camp BRIDGES is a specialty camp in the Southeast that provides camp experiences each summer for children who have had a renal, liver or heart transplant. This camp provides camp opportunities at a family camp for the entire family; a teen camp for those 13-18 (or having just graduated high school); and a young adult camp for those 18-25 in order to help assist them as they transition to independence. We hold a one-day camp during the winter to offer an additional way to enhance their QoL. There are multiple volunteers and all activities are geared to the age group attending that camp.

Results: By offering these opportunities, we have found that transplant recipients are more self-confident, more educated regarding their medical condition, and grow emotionally by spending time with peers and this enhances their overall QoL. Many of these campers come back and serve as mentors and role models for younger recipients.

Conclusion: By offering these opportunities, transplant recipients are more comfortable with themselves and with others, and are better able to understand their transplant needs which enhances their QoL.

Abstract selected for presentation at 2021 ANNA National Symposium