"I’ve never played golf before”
Evaluating a Professional Golfers Association (PGA) Australia Golf Project at
The Royal Children’s Hospital

Final report: Executive Summary
1. Executive summary

1.1. Introduction

The RCH Education Institute research team conducted an evaluation of a nine week golfing skills program held in the hospital from July – September 2012, in conjunction with Professional Golfers Association (PGA) Teaching Professional, Ryan Ward and teachers from the RCH Education Institute. Among other aims, one was to generate evidence on how Physical Education and sports can be integrated into teaching programs in a paediatric hospital setting. The program ran for two hours each week and comprised of a sixty minute theory session with students and a sixty minute practical skill session. The program was intended to build a basic understanding of golf, including the design and construction of a golf tournament, as well as to develop technique and skills among children and young people at the hospital. This final report details the findings of the evaluation of the Golf program in the hospital for students, teachers and the visiting golf professional, and includes a consideration of the benefits and feasibility of a potential Integrated Sports and Physical Education component in the RCH Education Institute’s teaching and learning program.

1.2. The research

The research employed a qualitative methodology and was conducted over a period of eight weeks of instruction leading to a tournament day in the ninth week. Researchers observed both in-patients and out-patients, siblings, friends and families who took part in this program, and conducted brief interviews with some of the participants. Researchers also conducted interviews with Education Institute teachers and PGA professional (Ryan Ward) who facilitated the program. The data collected was analysed and the major themes were drawn out.

Our analysis revealed seven overarching themes in this evaluation.

- Golf as an educational intervention
- Physical Education curriculum in the hospital
- The use of hospital space
- Golf as a distraction
- Golf as an engagement tool
- Golf as a tool for socialisation
- Barriers to engagement
1.3. Key findings

The program demonstrated that physical activities that are fun and easy to execute are attractive to children and visitors to the hospital. We also found that the golf program was inclusive of a range of children, regardless of age, sex, ability or health. The equipment was easy to use which helped students engage quickly with the program. The program enhanced socialisation and provided distraction to the hospitalised children, siblings, friends and families. Displays of smiling and laughter from participating children, young people, siblings, parents, teachers and bystanders indicated that the activity had the potential to reduce stress and help participants cope with anxiety.

Research evidence suggests that teaching physical education and sports can provide opportunities to introduce learning concepts traditionally linked to other subjects (Kibbe et al., 2011). This project has highlighted the potential for a Physical Education program to be integrated within the teaching and learning model of the Education Institute.

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