In 1986, Canadian therapeutic clowning began at Children's Hospital, Hotibe and subsequently in New York City with The Clown Care Unit. Since then, therapeutic clowning has become an integral part of health care teams throughout much of the developed world. This emergence of the therapeutic clown in health care settings is a natural fit with the altruistic and therapeutic nature of clowning.

Therapeutic Value of Clowning:

- Health care settings is a natural fit with the altruistic and therapeutic nature of clowning.
- The clown addresses, affirms and celebrates the “whole” patient.
- Other team members rely upon the clown to jointly meet patient goals (i.e. encourage a return to play; help to achieve a specific medical goal). One way the clown program works within the hospital is to provide time-out opportunities for patients who have a lot of medical attention and they need a chance to play.
- In the hospital, clowns are known to be the on-going presence who provides comforting, joyous, and positive experiences for patients.
- Therapeutic clowns help turn patients into child life specialists in their own right.
- The clown program shares the mandate to strive to reduce the stress and anxiety of hospitalization on children and their families. Through the medium of clowns, clowns enhance the hospital environment and provide a diversion and form of comfort for patients. They have a unique role in providing distraction and lightness, an honesty, and a tenderness.
- Medicine men in many aboriginal cultures.

Therapeutic Clowns:

- Therapeutic Clowns:  The Therapeutic Clown Program began in Winnipeg in May of 1986, and is the longest running therapeutic clowning program in Canada and perhaps the world. It was initiated by Karen Ridd (Robs). As the Child Life Department had already adopted a mascot puppet for their pediatric closed-circuit TV, they were very receptive to her innovative idea of clowning in hospital. After an initial pilot project was launched, therapeutic clowning quickly became a staple at the Children’s Hospital in Winnipeg.
- Throughout history, clowns and “clown play” have helped communities achieve balance and wholeness. Both reflect the nature of the environment in which they serve. In the circus, “clown play” helps release tension between the high risk acts. In medieval courts, clowns and jesters were able to circumvent behavioral norms through play in order to speak “inconvenient truth.”
- Whether a clown is juggling, playing music, eliciting laughter or sadly enduring the magic, juggling, bubble blowing, and face painting, the clown offers patients experiences that are spontaneous, creative, humorous, and supportive. The clown also interacts with patients families and members of the healthcare staff. In a setting without much opportunity for control over their own treatment or to empower the patients. The clown shares the stress and anxiety of hospitalization on children and their families through the medium of clowns. The clown is effective at reducing stress and anxiety for patients and families. Through therapeutic clowning, patients are able to escape from the stresses of the hospital environment and experience a sense of normalcy. The clown offers patients experiences that are spontaneous, creative, humorous, and supportive. The clown also interacts with patients families and members of the healthcare staff. In a setting without much opportunity for control over their own treatment or to empower the patients. The clown shares the stress and anxiety of hospitalization on children and their families through the medium of clowns. The clown is effective at reducing stress and anxiety for patients and families. Through therapeutic clowning, patients are able to escape from the stresses of the hospital environment and experience a sense of normalcy.
- Therapeutic Clowns: As part of the child health care team, the clown program shares the mandate to strive to reduce the stress and anxiety of hospitalization on children and their families. Through the medium of clowns, clowns enhance the hospital environment and provide a distraction and form of comfort for patients. They have a unique role in providing distraction and lightness, an honesty, and a tenderness.
- The Therapeutic Clown Program is a child life specialist who is responsible for the development and implementation of the clown program. He meets with child life staff and other health care professionals to discuss and develop patient care plans. He develops therapeutic relationships with long-term, chronic and high priority patients where appropriate. He has two clown personas in the hospital, Hubert and Onri. He is a non-speaking clown who is very child like. He is playful, vulnerable, and in need of direction and much help. On the other hand, Onri is a speaking clown who represents the adult world in the hospital. He wears a lab coat and presents himself as a researcher and inventor with banana knarana research and Development. He needs lots of help too... but being an adult, he just doesn’t know it.

What’s working?... How about therapeutic clowning!!

“Hubert is a five year old boy who lives at home with his mother. He goes to the hospital and when he puts his makeup on and costume on he grows tall. Then he visits the children in the hospital and makes them happy. When he takes his makeup and costume off he is a little boy again... and then he goes home to his mother.”

Therapeutic Clowns:

- Therapeutic Clowns: Therapeutic Clowns are highly skilled professionals who work with children with life-threatening illnesses.
- They are trained in the principles of therapeutic clowning and are able to use their skills to enhance the emotional well-being of children and their families.
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