

A B C D E F G H Children's Health

Homework Helps Patients H

(NAPS)—For children in hospitals who face days or even weeks of recovery time, homework does more than keep them up to date. Homework can provide a sense of normalcy and focus.

At Shriners Hospitals this type of continuous learning is either provided through teachers employed by local school districts or certified teachers who are staff members of the hospitals.

These teachers work with patients from kindergarten through high school, who have a wide range of learning abilities. Only one or two subjects might be emphasized, depending on a child's need.

"We have to set priorities and pick which subjects are the most important to the child," explained Melen Lunn, coordinator of the school program at the Northern California Shriners Hospital in Sacramento. "We focus on math a great deal because math is one of the hardest subjects to get behind in; it's so sequential."

Teachers in this unique setting can be challenged by a student's pain, the effects of medication, the need for rest, separation from family, or the stress brought on by a combination of any of the above. Physical and occupational therapy may limit class time further.

While most of a child's hospital stay involves physical recovery and healing, Lunn points out that school work helps boost mental health by reminding children that their familiar daily routine still exists outside the hospital.

At all Shriners Hospitals, part of the healing process is adjusting to physical changes such as burn scarring or the results of a spinal cord injury.

As a result, staff at the hospital, which provides treatment for children with orthopaedic prob-



School work can be a welcome addition to a child's stay in the hospital.

lems, severe burns and spinal cord injuries, must confront a variety of physical and emotional needs.

"We have to keep a lot of information in our heads about different medical conditions and disabilities and how they affect learning," said Lunn.

For more information on Shriners network of 22 hospitals that provide free treatment to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607, or visit www.shrinershq.org.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada. Shriners Hospitals provide free treatment to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion, or relationship to a Shriner.