Harry Potter in Medical Literature: A Review

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Chaitanya Varma,  
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, KMC, Manipal - India

Submitting Author:
Dr. Chaitanya Varma,  
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, KMC, Manipal - India

Previous Article Reference: http://www.webmedcentral.com/article_view/2818
Article ID: WMC002945
Article Type: Case Report
Submitted on: 29-Jan-2012, 10:35:21 AM GMT   Published on: 30-Jan-2012, 11:02:10 AM GMT
Article URL: http://www.webmedcentral.com/article_view/2945
Subject Categories: PAEDIATRICS
Keywords: Harry Potter, Literature, Influence, Children, Reading habits, Peer Pressure, Psychology
How to cite the article: Varma C, Shrikiran H, Suneel M, Karthick A. Harry Potter in Medical Literature: A Review. WebmedCentral PAEDIATRICS 2012;3(1):WMC002945
Copyright: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.
Source(s) of Funding:
None
Competing Interests:
None
Introduction

The Harry Potter books are a seven part children fantasy series written by the British author J K Rowling. Since the publication of the first in the series “Harry Potter and the Philosophers’ stone” they have become the fastest selling books in the world and have been translated into 67 different languages. The books follow the adventures of an eleven year old wizard Harry and his coming of age at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The Harry Potter books along with the film series are considered to be one of the most successful brands in human history valued in excess of 15 billion dollars.

Discussion

“Inside, just visible, was a baby boy, fast asleep. Under a tuft of jet black hair over his forehead they could see a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning”. A lightning shaped scar on Harry’s forehead is a result of the Killing Curse (“Avada Kedavra”) inflicted on him by Lord Voldermort. Harry is the only known person to survive the curse. Shamshian et al in 2006 described a case of a 14 year old girl having a scar on her forehead after she was struck by lightning. The girl survived the episode with very little morbidity and the scar was later excised to reveal an embedded foreign object[1].

“Then a pain pierced his head like he’d never felt before, it was as though his scar was on fire...” Harry Potter suffers from severe debilitating headaches throughout the series. Sheftell and Steiner have proved that in spite of some unusual features, they meet all but one of the ICHD-II criteria for migraine, so allowing the diagnosis of Probable migraines [2].

Rosegrant in 2009 had proved that the enormous popularity of the Harry Potter books were because of the deep resonance of psychological issues of adolescents teens which he brings to life. According to the author, these developmental themes are explored in order to better understand the Harry Potter books, as; conversely, the books are explored in order to better understand these themes [3].

Subkowski P analysed the mental development of Harry Potter after the loss of his parents, neglect by his relatives, his strong friendships, and peer pressure at school, his idolization of Professor Dumbledore and his initiation into adult life through a period of seven years. His various conflicts and their resolutions help in the strong identification of his character by the young adult leading to his popularity [4].

Noctor C has clinically employed the main themes in the Harry Potter stories to assist the psychotherapeutic work in children and adolescents. The author tried to illustrate the symbolism and metaphor in the Harry Potter stories and elucidate why these books may appeal to young people with mental difficulties [5].

“He spoke in a barely more than a whisper... but like Professor McGonagall, Snape had the gift of keeping a class silent without effort.” Conn JJ in his paper analyses the teaching styles of the staff at Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft in the context of contemporary generic and medical education literature. It argues that effective teachers demonstrate not only an in-depth knowledge of their discipline but possess a keen appreciation of the cognitive changes that occur in their students during the learning process [6].

Stephen et al proved that there was a significant fall in the emergency room admissions on the weekends when the Harry Potter books-The Order of the Phoenix and The Half Blood Prince, were released in 2003 and 2005 respectively. It was hypothesised that high quality children books could act as “distraction therapy” and prevent injuries [7].

To differentiate between the historical figures (eg. Abraham Lincoln) that children learn about and fantasy characters (e.g., Harry Potter) a study was done by Corriuva et al. Both younger (3- and 4-year-olds) and older children (5-, 6-, and 7-year-olds) could understand the status of familiar figures, correctly judging historical figures to be real and fictional figures to be pretend. However, only older children used the narrative to make an appropriate assessment of the status of the protagonist, when presented with information about novel figures embedded in either a realistic narrative or a narrative with obvious fantasy elements [8].

In a study done by Pfeifer et al on 12 adults and 12 children the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) was relatively more active during self knowledge (short phrases describing themselves) than social knowledge retrieval, and the medial posterior parietal cortex (MPPC) was relatively more active during social knowledge(short phrases describing Harry Potter) than...
self-knowledge retrieval[9].
Czubek and Greenwald developed an innovative way in which Deaf children could understand the Harry Potter series and its underlying themes. They used a Deaf lens and a Deaf Studies Template while using the American Sign Language to provide an insight into the world of Harry Potter [10].

Conclusion

Harry Potter and his wizarding world has done what no person could achieve in the past few decades-To get children away from never ending TV viewing and transport them to magical world of imagination. Parents and teachers have credited the series with inspiring a generation of kids to read for pleasure away from the world of instant text messaging, Game boys and music downloads. Now that the series has come to an end it remains to be seen if Harry Potter has managed to create a generation of lifelong readers in his wake.

References


Acknowledgement(s)

CV a lifelong Harry Potter fan prepared the draft. SH,SM and KA reviewed it. None of them has ever attended Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.
Disclaimer

This article has been downloaded from WebmedCentral. With our unique author driven post publication peer review, contents posted on this web portal do not undergo any prepublication peer or editorial review. It is completely the responsibility of the authors to ensure not only scientific and ethical standards of the manuscript but also its grammatical accuracy. Authors must ensure that they obtain all the necessary permissions before submitting any information that requires obtaining a consent or approval from a third party. Authors should also ensure not to submit any information which they do not have the copyright of or of which they have transferred the copyrights to a third party.

Contents on WebmedCentral are purely for biomedical researchers and scientists. They are not meant to cater to the needs of an individual patient. The web portal or any content(s) therein is neither designed to support, nor replace, the relationship that exists between a patient/site visitor and his/her physician. Your use of the WebmedCentral site and its contents is entirely at your own risk. We do not take any responsibility for any harm that you may suffer or inflict on a third person by following the contents of this website.