ONE OF THE first things I was told by my lecturer was that to become a competent children’s nurse you have to acknowledge, accept and understand that ‘children are not miniature adults’.

Initially, I did not agree with this statement as I was certain that I was already on the road to becoming a competent children’s nurse. I had just completed several weeks of the general nursing academic and clinical component of my junior freshman year. I had learned about the clinical manifestations and nursing care of a variety of illnesses and injuries that an adult can suffer. Surely, I thought, nursing children could not be that different to nursing adults?

In my experience, there are many core concepts and skills that can be transferred between general and children’s nursing. But I have quickly learned that children are unique and require specialised care. Children’s nursing is an art and requires creativity, adaptability and flexibility to provide holistic care to children irrespective of their age or developmental level.

Children are continuously developing as they build the bodies that they will have for the rest of their lives. The children’s nurse is required to be vigilant in identifying and resolving any threat to the child’s physical development promptly. This can be difficult as children often have great difficulty understanding and communicating their own health needs as they are continually progressing through various intellectual and physical stages of development.

Children can deteriorate quickly and this is the most challenging aspect of my training so far. Children’s nurses have to acquire apt observation skills and a sense of intuition that I have not witnessed in other areas. I hope to achieve these skills so that I can become a competent children’s nurse by the end of my training.

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