Japanese parents' beliefs about medical play, one form of therapeutic play in healthcare settings, were examined. Medical play is still a new way to support children in Japan where child life programs have been recently introduced. It is important to examine parents' perspective so that professionals can gain parents' understanding by explaining it appropriately.

Mothers of 2- to 5-year-old children were recruited and asked to answer yes-no and open-ended questions about two medical play scenarios as well as questions regarding normative play among young children. Qualitative content analysis was used in analyzing the data collected from 26 mothers.

The results revealed that all mothers thought normative play was helpful for young children's learning and development. It was common for parents to believe medical play is not helpful because it reminds children of negative feelings such as pain and fear during and after immunization. Some parents supported medical play idea depending on the contexts. Cultural implications regarding mothers' answers and the limitations of the study are discussed.