

Perspectives and Approaches to the Dynamic and Developmental Issues in Adolescent Health Care: Addressing the Needs of Specific Populations of Youth

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In this month's Rhode Island Medical Journal we continue the focus on Adolescent Health first presented in the August issue, which can be accessed here:

<http://www.rimed.org/rimedicaljournal/2016/08/2016-08-15-adolescent-health-complete.pdf>

It is important to note that health behaviors beginning in adolescence continue into adulthood, making this a unique time in a life-course for interventions that will have a lasting impact.

Providing health care for teens requires an understanding of adolescent psycho-social, psycho-sexual, and cognitive development. Brain maturation from age 10 to age 24 is dramatic, is variable in timing and tempo, and is not always in synchrony with the dynamic physical maturation that happens throughout adolescence. The capacity of a 12-year-old to communicate his or her concerns and symptoms, to understand the ramifications of actions or behaviors, and to fully engage in healthcare decision making certainly can vary widely but is also drastically different from a 16-year-old or a 21-year-old. Helping young people navigate adolescence with the tools, knowledge and motivation to stay healthy requires building a developmental scaffolding. Partnering with parents, schools, and communities allows teens to experiment, to grow, to take risks and make good choices.

This month, we look at specific conditions and the health needs of specific populations of youth. **DR. ABIGAIL DONALDSON** and her team present an update on the care of individuals with eating disorders. **DR. DIANE DERMARDER-OSIAN** and colleagues write about an integrated approach to psychiatric care for children and youth with medical conditions. She describes a unique, team-based integrated care model provided both in an in-patient setting and in a partial hospital setting. **DRS. KRISTYN GERGELIS, JONATHAN KOLE** and **ELIZABETH LOWENHAUPT** write about the healthcare needs of incarcerated youth and **DRS. AGNIESZKA JANICKA** and **MICHELLE FORCIER** discuss transgender and gender non-conforming youth. **DR. CHRISTINE BARRON** and colleagues present their research on RI pediatricians and their training, screening, and knowledge about domestic sex trafficking of minors.

Quality health care that recognizes the dynamic developmental nature of adolescence can help youth stay safe and make good behavioral choices. It can be attuned to some of the potential pitfalls and roadblocks to healthy adolescence as well as motivations for positive health-affirming decisions. It can be a great opportunity to cultivate a strong foundation for adult health.

Guest Editor

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