

REPORT

Addressing young people's health inequalities: a joint conference between AYPH (Association for Young People's Health) and YPHSIG (Young People's Health Special Interest Group).

Adolescence is a fascinating and critical life stage. It is a rite of passage for all. However, providing and accessing appropriate healthcare for this age group can be particularly challenging. This two day joint conference presented many opportunities to help further understand some of the barriers experienced by both service users and service providers.

I am extremely grateful for funding provided by the FPSA which allowed me to attend the conference and present a poster there. I have already changed my clinical practice and hope to further develop an interest in young people's healthcare as I continue my training. I will also be providing feedback to local consultant colleagues and fellow trainees.

Day 1

Opening plenary session

Following the conference introduction and welcome Dr Ann Hoskins, Director for Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing, Public Health England presented 'Key priorities for young people's health in the new system'. The plenary considered the importance of targeting appropriate age related health resources for young people. The importance of appropriate age-grouping was stressed. The role and priorities of Public Health England was outlined and important trends recognised such as the increasing number of 15-19 year old girls being admitted to hospital following episodes of self-harm.

Key points

Increasing incidence of self harm leading to hospitalisation

Important role of Public Health England and the outcomes framework

The importance of appropriate age-bands in designing and providing healthcare for the future is critical. Suggested grouping as follows - 0-5yrs, 6-11yrs, 12-16yrs and 17-24 yrs.

Dr Ann Hagell, research Lead AYPH introduced the launch of the newly published 'Key Data on Adolescence 2013'. The session presented an overview of the work behind the publication with some historical background. The focus of the session was looking at the social determinants of health in adolescence where the links between social deprivation, education and health were explored.

Key points

Approximately 22% of young people in the UK aged 11-15 yrs were living in families with the lowest level of income in 2011/12

GCSE results are strongly linked to social-economic status

Rates of youth unemployment have risen (21.1%) in the UK. Participation in further and higher education has increased in recent years – 47% of those aged 18 or over taking part by the age of 30.

Posters

During the coffee and lunch breaks over both days there was opportunity to view the wide array of poster presentations. These were of very high quality and led to many interesting and fruitful discussions.

Parallel session 1

Dr Daniel Hale discussed the equalisation hypothesis – his research explores the realisation that young people reach a point in adolescence where they are less compromised by social deprivation than before or after. This is a recognised theory and the work presented postulated that peer group identification and influence could explain the equalisation through adolescence and questioned how this may be carried forward into early adulthood to prevent re-emergence of inequality.

Dr Ann-Lise Goddings, ICH, UCL presented her work on the developmental mismatch in structural brain maturation across brain regions and if there is any link to risk-taking behaviour in adolescence. This is ongoing work and as yet has not uncovered any significant evidence to support the theory however work is ongoing.

Dr Farah Jamal, UEL presented her work on the impact that school environment has on young people's health. The main themes revealed from her study were: the important influence of 'street styles', the impact of unsupervised spaces and safety at school, the importance of teacher student relationships and students ways of 'escaping the school environment' which involved the use of social media. The work revealed areas for further research and highlighted the importance of collaboration between health and education.

Workshop

Growing up with learning disability

The workshop explored the complex issues surrounding the long-term relationships required to maintain a high standard of care and the importance of maintaining high level of input from primary care. Issues discussed in both small groups and presentations included appropriate terminology and understanding of the condition. Use of the term learning disability after age 13yrs. Strategic importance of using patient held documents – hospital passports, wishes document etc. Making and taking opportunities to discuss all aspects of life and healthcare holistically. Role play was

utilised to explore the difficulties sometimes experienced when attempting to facilitate individual one-to-one consultations allowing the young person the opportunity to discuss personal issues.

Afternoon Plenary session

Young peoples panel presentation and discussion on confidentiality and access to services.

A panel of young people presented some issues from their own experience and some work called the 'Be Healthy Project' which is in conjunction with AYPH. Young people have developed a series of resources to help encourage peers to access healthcare and to offer help in making sure they can get the best out of it. The main issues raised were about the lack of holistic approach and the concerns young people have over confidentiality which is not well explained by professionals and not well understood by young people, the session stimulated a lively discussion.

Key Points

Young people want their confidentiality respected and often are not asked or informed when information is shared – a great concern for them.

Young people more likely to engage with age appropriate holistic care.

The AYPH in conjunction with young people have developed resources to help both healthcare workers and young people to work together.

The final talk of the day 'Are social inequalities affecting the health of young people?' once again considered the evidence available concerning the importance of recognising and dealing with social inequality as a strategy to improve the health of young people. This session pulled many of the themes from the day together and highlighted once again the fact that social inequality has a direct impact on the health of young people and in their ability to access quality healthcare, particularly with long-term conditions. The role of social media was highlighted as a method of reaching young people.

A panel discussion close the day and reviewed many of the main issues before a short drinks reception allowed the opportunity for delegates to discuss further the key points of the day and to network.

Day 2

Morning plenary session

In the first plenary Dr John Coleman, the chair of AYPH, discussed 'How the adolescent stage is changing and what does this mean for health'. Four main areas were discussed – Family, School, Peer group and social media. Aspects of each area were explored. The main focus of the talk centred on the role of social media and how this has been highlighted in the press and we often think and hear about all of the negatives rather than focussing on the positives and possibly the massive potential

resource to allow healthcare professionals to access young people and allow young people to access healthcare.

Key points

Families are changing in construct with more complex social circumstances.

School presents an opportunity for young people to raise health issues and has a significant role to play in health promotion.

Peer group influence plays an important role both positively and negatively affecting healthcare.

Social media (the digital world) is expanding very rapidly and although there are very significant dangers within it there are also many positives and potentially huge benefits for young people accessing healthcare.

The second plenary in this session presented by Dr Wood, YPHSIG, discussed the most recent and relevant publications reviewed in medical literature. The NEETS study, Obesity, immunisation schedules and Vitamin D supplementation and increasing numbers of young people with self-harm were discussed.

Key points

The YPHSIG web-site provides reviews of recent relevant articles concerning and is a useful resource to be aware of.

Parallel sessions

Workshop: Young people with long-term health conditions – their experience, adherence to treatment and learning for the future.

The workshop explored the context and care networks that young people may experience. The role of education was discussed and the difficulties faced in the school setting where medication is needed. The social and psychological issues relating to adherence to treatment were discussed and different strategies to facilitate and support adherence to medication were reviewed. The workshop provided many resources to allow professionals to better understand the issues that young people face and allow them to explore these with young people more openly.

Workshop: ‘What needs to be focussed on in a young people’s consultation?’

The HEEADSSS acronym was presented and discussed. Delegate’s experiences were shared and a number of good examples of practice were highlighted such as the use of small pre-printed cards providing information about the subject areas that may be covered and offering the potential of 1:1 consultation. The use of this tool will be helpful in making sure a holistic approach is used and the needs of young people met more often.

Final Plenary session

The session ended the day with three presentations. The first looked at the role of early life experiences in determining adolescent outcomes. A study following Romanian orphans placed in good quality families in the UK having experienced severe deprivation showed that early life experience before 6/12 is less likely to have impact later than after 6/12 of age. The second plenary supported the first with further information about the social determinants of health affecting adolescents and summarised many of the main points made over the course of the conference. The final session discussed many issues regarding the importance of appropriate education concerning young people's health in the curriculum of paediatricians and GP's.

The conference was brought to a close.

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