

Report to FPSA

Funding to attend Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine Annual Meeting

18-21 March 2015

We are extremely grateful to FPSA for providing funding for Frances Perrow to attend this important international conference, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine Annual Meeting (SAHM 2015). It was a unique opportunity to present findings from the GP Champions for Youth Health project, which highlighted the benefit of collaboration between primary care and the voluntary sector in improving young people's health, especially in relation to mental health issues such as stress, depression, anxiety and anger.

There was a lot of interest in this work as many delegates related to the rising demand for counselling and reported that physicians were largely unaware of other services available to help adolescents, such as the not-for-profit sector.

SAHM 2015 also proved to be an invaluable opportunity to get professional updates on new research and emerging themes in adolescent health. There were over 800 delegates registered from all over the world and there was time to share research findings and best practice through networking, workshops, lectures and poster presentations.

The focus of the conference was 'Embracing Transitions: Promoting Health Throughout Adolescence and Young Adulthood' and it was noted that adolescents go through more transitions than any other age group, in terms of life stages and health care services.

There were many topics of high importance and relevance for UK practitioners including evidence-based practices for young adults, intervention research with adolescents, issues around chronic illness and transition, communicating information to adolescents and motivation for self-management.

Work on a USA university campus during a flu outbreak introduced some innovative ideas of how young people can become effective purveyors of health messages. Students said they didn't want the university to 'invade their personal space' by putting health messages on social media platforms such as Facebook, but they were happy to get health messages from their peers. Students came up with their own health campaigns and became peer ambassadors, providing useful messages and an interesting model for health literacy initiatives in the UK.

The issue of student life also raised important themes about sexual consent and intimate partner violence (IPV) - especially on campus – and how to deal with student stress and mental health problems. The transition from home to university and the changing support systems offered by parents, was explored in depth, along with the role that university or college staff need to take on.

The conference also provided the opportunity to explore the trend towards 'telemedicine' in the USA and its application in a UK setting along with its acceptability to young people.

Projects from different countries explored the effectiveness of interventions such as young people's drop-in services in health settings, the type of healthcare needed for young men in the criminal justice system and different approaches to school-based programmes.

SAHM 2015 has provided excellent professional development and initiated many new ideas and techniques for AYPH to explore in our future work.