



Are we Doing Enough for Our Youth? Better Late than Never!



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Introduction

On most days there are moments where everything is alright and on other days, those moments divide themselves into pieces of pain, misery and insufferable anxiety. Those moments breakdown into a thousand possibilities and millions of people suffer from those moments. It's not something which can be described and put in a box- but it can be defined and supported in a room. It is a fortunate tendency for children to grow into the blossoming age of adolescence-where they discover their potential and run towards it. Our children are constantly encouraged by schools, teachers, parents and even their peers to reach for the stars. Technology and media has made everything so easily accessible to the current generation of teens - thus, perfection and erudition is something which is naturally expected of them. Thus expectation of a certain level of education branches out to expectations in other regards as well - such as physicality, expressive behaviors and social interactions.

Every generation has their own establishment of constructs. Constructs being social and individual creations of "conventions and rules" which people or genders must stick to. Coming back to our current generation, these constructs do not escape them either! The constructs we have created- be it subconsciously or consciously -for our children (in every manner of life) might have more losses than gains.

Fortunately most teens can grow under these pressures of societal constructs around them with good mental and physical health. However the incidence and prevalence of extreme consequences such as chronic diseases in adolescence are on the rise and are likely due to the conformity band enforced on children between the age groups 12 to 20. Protecting our teens and adolescents is our combined duty including parents, healthcare providers, teachers, community and the adolescents themselves but they need guidance and counseling at the right time and by the right people.

An earlier onset of obesity associated disorders, poor weight gain due to eating disorders, longer survival after serious childhood disorders and other unknown factors. The most common problems among adolescents are related to growth and development, school,

childhood illnesses that continue into adolescence, mental and psychological health disorders and the consequences of risky illegal behaviors including injury, legal consequences, pregnancy, infectious diseases and addiction. Unintentional injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes and injuries resulting from interpersonal violence are leading causes of death and disability among adolescents.

Psychosocial adjustment is a hallmark of this phase of development because even normal individuals struggle with issues of identity, autonomy, sexuality and relationships. "Who am I, where am I going, and how do I relate to all these people in my life?" are frequent pre-occupations for most adolescents. Psycho-sexual disorders are more common during adolescence than during childhood, many unhealthy behaviors begin during adolescence having an eating disorder, poor diet, obesity, smoking, using drugs and violent behavior can lead to acute health problems, chronic disorders or morbidity later in life. Puberty itself results in several hormone driven changes in the body, which if not discussed or foreshadowed, can result in confusion, depression and anxiety. Adolescents should continue to receive vaccinations according to the recommended schedule.

Acne is extremely common and needs to be addressed because of its impact on self esteem. Trauma is very common among adolescents, with sports and motor vehicle injuries most frequent. Motor vehicle crashes and other unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide are the 4 leading causes of mortality in the adolescent's age group. Common diseases among adolescents include infections, sexually transmitted diseases, endocrine disorders (particularly thyroid disorders) and the disorders common among adolescent girls including menstrual irregularities, urinary tract infections, iron deficiency anemia, psychosocial adjustment issues and so on. Sexual abuse & pregnancy also is not a very rare occurrence and must be kept in mind when treating adolescent girls. Fortunately, although not very common, neo-plastic disease such as leukemia, lymphoma, bone cancers and brain tumors also occur.

Unfortunately one of the most neglected areas of care is in this age group when these young girls are between childhood and adults.

The purpose of an idea of starting a dedicated adolescent clinic is to create a safe space where these topics can be discussed and can be brought around in a positive light. To prevent further mishaps, the “right-now” should be corrected. The recommended plan is to have dedicated regular adolescent clinics as part of ministry of health as well as in private sector. Support groups to help parents as well as adolescents can really play an important part in the improvement of communication between the parents, healthcare staff and teens. It is a surprising fact that there is often very poor communication between adolescents/teens and parents or family members and this is mainly because of the generation gap and in modern times

this gap is widened by the media and technology which has actually played a part in worsening of the situation.

Counseling of menstrual issues, sexual roles, mental and physical health issues can be sought for in a friendly, confidential environment. It will also help in improving the general health and awareness of young girls who are the future mothers and it will certainly help in overall reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality. What we all need to realize and understand is that it needs to be done NOW- to make it all better for later. Parents and medical staff and community have to get together to start these efforts now.



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