Opportunities for Adolescent Patients in a Mental Health Setting to Participate in their own Health Care

Caroline Cho, Flinders University, November 29th 2006

AIMS

To examine factors which may impact on adolescent patients in a mental health setting to exercise their right to participate in their care.

KEY FINDINGS

The adolescent patient with mental health issues has specialised needs that are different from the adult patient and that are not met fully by a general ward. Evidence shows that adolescents can and do participate in their own healthcare with positive results. These include:

- Increased patient satisfaction
- Better therapeutic relationships
- Improvement in design & use of ward
- Peer support
- Improved health outcomes and compliance to care

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Legislation clearly gives adolescents the right to participate. However, the opportunity for them to participate is limited. These are:

- Social constructs
- Power imbalances between adults and adolescent patients
- Stigma against mental health patients’ abilities to participate
- Lack of communication
- Nurses’ own values/beliefs regarding adolescents & mental health
- Vague standards for the mature minor clause

REFERENCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The poster development was supported by the PHCRED programs at Flinders and Adelaide University, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing; the Mentoring project was supported by Flinders University’s School of Nursing & Midwifery; valuable input into the project was given by Aly Hurton and staff at Boylan Ward, Women’s and Children’s Hospital.