

Adolescents Need Specialized Health Care Facilities

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The second decade of life is a unique period. World Health Organization (WHO) defines individuals in the age group 10-19 years as "adolescents" and "youth" as the 15-24 years age group. These two overlapping age groups are combined in the group "young people" covering the age range 10-24 years. There are 1.2 billions adolescents worldwide today and one in every five people in the world is an adolescent. In Bangladesh 25% of our population are adolescents.

Many adolescents experiment with adult behaviors and are increasingly independent in personal habits. Health care services can play a key role in primary prevention of health problems among adolescents. Adolescents require a broad set of health care services to meet their complex developmental needs. Education and training programs for health care professionals should specifically address the needs of adolescents. Adolescents are vulnerable population. They must be informed about accurate and complete information about the problems during adolescent period. Parents and family are encouraged to solve the problems of their adolescent children.

This group of people is not at all informed with regard to their bodies, sexuality and physical well being. Adolescents often suffer from illness in their reproductive organs. Nearly two thirds of premature deaths and one third of the total disease burden in adults are associated with conditions or behaviors that begin in adolescents. Most of untimely death of adolescents is due to violence, suicide and accidents. Adolescents are not homogenous group and their needs vary with their gender, stage of development, life circumstances, and the socioeconomic conditions in which they live. These groups include frustrated youths taking drugs, young people suffering from psychiatric disorders, teens

bearing unwanted pregnancy, homeless youths, youths with physical disabilities and handicapped adolescents.

Immunization programs, substance abuse counseling and treatment, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases are to be taken for adolescents and young adults. A special health service program is to be focused for autistic adolescents. At least 20% of young people will experience some form of mood disturbances, depression, suicidal behaviors and eating disorders. Suicidal tendency is increasing among adolescent females in Bangladesh as a result of 'Eve teasing'. The community will have to fight altogether against this evil thing. We need adolescent-friendly environment in communities.

The society demands a strong operational commitment from all levels of government, and national and international developmental agencies to provide health care facilities among adolescents.

References

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