

Adolescent Health GP Resource Kit

Practice Points

section two - chapter three

Negotiating a Management Plan

Provide Feedback see page 47

Provide the young person with feedback about your assessment and encourage them to participate in developing a management plan:

- ◆ Provide information about their growth and development
- ◆ Highlight areas of concern where intervention may be needed
- ◆ Invite questions or comments
- ◆ If the young person is engaged in risky behaviours, provide information about the risks associated with these behaviours and discuss ways to protect themselves:

Example:

"Rebecca, there are a few things you've mentioned that I'm concerned about – especially your drug use. I know you've said that it's a big part of what you do when you're with your friends. But I'm wondering how much you know about the effects of marijuana, and some of the risks that it has for young people. If you like, I can give you some information about this and we can discuss ways to make sure that you are safe."

The Management Plan see page 47

- ◆ Negotiate a management plan with the young person:
 - outline treatment options
 - actively involve them in making decisions about treatment
 - explain your reasons for recommending certain treatments
 - if necessary, facilitate a referral to other specialist services – e.g. Psychologist, youth service

Wrapping Up the Interview see page 48

- ◆ Ask if there are any other problems/concerns they would like to talk about
- ◆ Identify possible sources of support – who can they talk to about things that are troubling them?
- ◆ Adopt an 'open door' approach – let them know they can speak to you about problems and encourage them to contact you if they need assistance
- ◆ Explain how to make an appointment by themselves if they need to see you
- ◆ If the young person has come with a parent, discuss what to tell mum or dad, and which areas they don't want to discuss with their parents
- ◆ Offer to talk to the parent(s) on their behalf about any sensitive issues – respect the young person's wishes to not discuss certain issues with parents

"Rebecca, before your mother comes back I'd like to be clear about what to tell her and what not to talk about. What would you like mum to know about what is going on for you? What sort of support would you like to get from mum?"

Follow-Up

- ◆ If a follow-up appointment is needed, encourage the young person to return and emphasise that it is important that you see them again
- ◆ If you are concerned about them keeping an appointment, make a contract with them to return – if appropriate, offer to give a reminder call
- ◆ Ask the young person about the best way to contact them for follow up

Dealing with Parents *see page 49*

- ◆ If a young person has come with a parent, spend some time with them – either alone or together with the young person, as well as seeing the adolescent by themselves
- ◆ Provide information about the young person's growth and development, strengths and achievements, and if appropriate, areas of concern
- ◆ Summarise the main health issues and your management plan – share any relevant information that the young person has agreed to
- ◆ Respond to the parents' concerns while respecting the adolescent's right to confidentiality
 - explain that the young person's need for confidentiality is normal and can be an opportunity for the adolescent to take on more responsibility
- ◆ Provide information and education about the young person's concerns
- ◆ Guide them in how they can be involved in supporting the management plan and how to respond to any risk taking behaviours that the adolescent is involved in
- ◆ Be sensitive to the concerns of parents from other cultural backgrounds
 - respect their authority with regard to decision-making while helping them to recognise the young person's growing need for independence
 - try to find a suitable balance between engaging the family authority system and supporting the young person's ability to make decisions for themselves
- ◆ Facilitate communication between the young person and their parents about difficult issues

chapter three

Negotiating a Management Plan

Once you have completed your assessment, develop the management plan in conjunction with the young person, and where appropriate, with their parents. The management plan is a process of shared decision making. By actively engaging the young person in developing a treatment plan, you will empower the young person to be an active partner in the treatment process. This will also increase the likelihood of compliance to the treatment regimen.

Provide Feedback

Provide the young person with feedback about your assessment and encourage them to participate in developing a management plan¹:

- ◆ State your understanding of the main concerns and issues as expressed by them
- ◆ Provide the young person with information about their growth and development – identify and compliment them on areas of their life where they are doing well (e.g. school, sports, friendships) and reinforce their strengths
- ◆ Provide them with reassurance that they are normal; you can do this by normalising, where appropriate, the symptoms or problems they are experiencing:

Example: "Many people experience headaches and sleeplessness when they are under a lot of stress...but we can check this out further to see if there is anything else that may be causing this."

Or:

"It's not unusual for young people your age to feel confused and uncertain about sexual feelings and sexual relationships...perhaps we can talk about this some more and look at any concerns or questions you have about this."

- ◆ Highlight areas of concern where intervention and treatment may be needed
- ◆ Help them understand the connection between symptoms and other problems they may be experiencing; take a straightforward and honest approach to this:

"Michael, your headaches are something we can deal with by helping you to cope better with stress at school. However, I am concerned about how

depressed you're feeling and I think we need to look at what we can do about this."

- ◆ If the young person is engaged in risky behaviours, share your concerns about these and provide information about the risks associated with these behaviours. Discuss ways of protecting themselves from these risks:

"Rebecca there are a few things you've mentioned that I'm concerned about – especially your alcohol use. I know you've said that it's a big part of what you do when you're with your friends. But I'm wondering how much you know about the effects of alcohol, and some of the risks that it has for young people. If you like, I can give you some information about this and we can discuss ways to make sure that you stay safe..."

See Chapter 5 – Risk Taking and Health Promotion

Negotiate a Management Plan

- ◆ Negotiate a management plan with the young person:
 - outline treatment options
 - explain your reasons for recommending certain treatments
 - actively involve them in making decisions about management options
- ◆ Set realistic treatment and behaviour change goals that are relevant to the patient's health concerns, developmental stage and life circumstances
- ◆ Make sure that the management plan consists of treatment that the young person can understand and manage
- ◆ If you are prescribing medication or recommending investigations, explain your reasons for this and what is involved in any procedures
- ◆ Initiate early intervention for problems or risk factors identified in the consultation or **HEEADSSS** assessment – for example:
 - health education and information
 - basic counselling
 - family mediation
 - referral to counselling or specialist services

See also Chapter 12 – Enhancing Compliance

Wrapping Up the Interview ²

- ◆ Invite questions or comments from the young person
- ◆ Ask if they have any other problems/concerns that have not been raised already in the interview which they would like to talk about
- ◆ Identify possible sources of support – who can they talk to about things that are troubling them?
- ◆ Adopt an ‘open door’ approach – let them know that they can speak to you about problems and encourage them to contact you if they need assistance
- ◆ Explain how to make an appointment by themselves if they need to see you
- ◆ If the young person has come with a parent, discuss what to tell mum or dad, and identify which areas they don’t want to discuss with their parents
- ◆ Offer to talk to the parent(s) on their behalf about any sensitive issues; respect the young person’s wishes to not discuss certain issues with parents

Example: “Rebecca, before you mother comes back in I’d like to be clear about what to tell her and what not to talk about. What would you like mum to know about what is going on for you? What sort of support would you like to get from mum?”

Or:

“If you’d like, I could talk to your mother about some of the things that are happening for you. But I need to be clear about what you’d like me to say or not say to mum.”

See also Involving Parents (below)

Follow-Up

- ◆ If a follow-up appointment is needed, encourage the young person to return and emphasise that it is important that you see them again
- ◆ If you are concerned about the young person keeping an appointment, make a contract with them to return – if appropriate, offer to give them a reminder call
- ◆ Ask the young person about the best way to contact them for follow up
- ◆ Make a follow-up appointment if further work is required

When booking a follow-up appointment, it is a good idea to walk to the reception desk with the young person and put their name in the reception book, or ask the receptionist to do so – it is more likely that the appointment will be kept this way

- ◆ If necessary, facilitate a referral to a specialist or other agency – e.g. counsellor, youth service

See Chapter 13 – Collaborative Care

Involving Parents ²

For most adolescents, parents are the main providers of physical and emotional support. It is important to involve them in any management/treatment plan – especially with younger adolescents or if the young person’s cultural background necessitates it:

- ◆ The GP must sensitively judge the level of parental involvement required – balancing the young person’s need for confidentiality and autonomy with the need to keep the parents engaged and involved
- ◆ This decision depends on a number of factors:
 - the age and developmental stage of the young person
 - the nature of the relationship between the young person and parent(s)
 - the nature of the presenting problem – parents may need to be involved where major health issues are concerned (e.g. unplanned pregnancy, prescription of medications, suicidal behaviour); or when dealing with problems where the family will play a major role in supporting or implementing the management plan, such as eating disorders or obesity
- ◆ Where possible, make a collaborative decision – discussing the pro’s and con’s with the young person
- ◆ From a medico-legal perspective, this also means taking into account the young person’s capacity for decision-making and informed consent

See Chapter 6 – Medico-Legal Issues

- ◆ Be sensitive to the concerns of parents from cultural backgrounds where health care may be viewed as a family matter
 - respect their wishes/rights to be involved in their adolescent’s health care

See Chapter 7 – Culturally Competent Practice

Dealing with Parents

- ◆ If a young person has come with a parent, spend some time with the parent – either alone or together with the young person after you have seen the adolescent by themselves
- ◆ Parents may need information and education about the young person's concerns, as well as guidance in how best to respond to their adolescent and what role to take in supporting the young person's treatment
- ◆ In particular, they may need support on how to deal with risk-taking behaviours the young person may be involved with – e.g. substance use, sexual activity
- ◆ Provide them with reassurance and support to dispel any fears or anxiety
- ◆ Respond to the parents' concerns while respecting the adolescent's right to confidentiality
 - explain that the young person's need for confidentiality is normal and can be an opportunity for the adolescent to take on more responsibility (rather than a sign of secretiveness)

See Chapter 1 – 'Defining Confidentiality', Chapter 1 – Conducting a Youth-Friendly Consultation

Addressing Resistance

- ◆ If the young person is adamant that they don't want their parents to know or be involved, carefully explore the barriers to this:
 - "What are your fears or concerns about your parents knowing about your situation?"*
 - "How do you think your mother would react if you were to tell her about this problem?"*
- ◆ Over time, you can work towards involving parents or another support person:
 - "If you could, what would you like to be able to tell your parents?"*
 - "How would you like your parents to respond so that you felt supported?"*
 - "What do you need from your parents to help you with this problem?"*
- ◆ Your duty of confidentiality does not preclude encouraging and assisting young people to talk to parents about important issues – this may be a goal of future consultations

- ◆ GPs can play a key role in facilitating communication about difficult issues between young people and their parents
- ◆ There may be situations where, because of medico-legal issues and/or the age of the adolescent, you need to inform the parents about the young person's situation
- ◆ Where possible, however, hand back the choice and responsibility to the young person for the decision of whether to inform parents

Approaches to Communicating with Parents

- ◆ Give an overview of the consultation with the young person:

Example:

"Michael and I have had a talk about his health and I have examined him. I also discussed the issue of confidentiality and explained what this means."

- ◆ If it hasn't already been done, explain the limits of confidentiality to the parents
- ◆ Summarise the main health issues and your management plan – share any relevant information that the young person has agreed to
- ◆ Provide information about the young person's growth and development, strengths and achievements, and if appropriate, areas of concern
- ◆ Invite questions or comments from the parents
- ◆ Reassure the parents that you are aware of their concerns and supportive of their role, even though it is important for you to see the adolescent alone and in confidence
- ◆ Guide them in how they can be involved in supporting the management plan and how to respond to any risk taking behaviours that the adolescent is involved in
- ◆ Help them to support the developing independence of the adolescent

practice points

- ◆ Provide the young person with feedback about your assessment and actively involve them in developing a management plan
- ◆ Identify risk behaviours and provide relevant information and education
- ◆ Set realistic treatment goals – appropriate to the young person's health concerns, developmental stage and lifestyle
- ◆ Where appropriate, discuss with the young person the level of involvement they wish their parents to have
- ◆ Guide parents in how to support the management plan and ways to respond to their adolescent's risk taking behaviours

References:

- 1 Sanci, L. (2001) *Adolescent Health Care Principles*. Centre for Adolescent Health. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Melbourne.
- 2 Bennett, D. L. and Kang, M. Adolescence, in Oates K, Currow K, and Hu W. (2001) *Child Health: a practical manual for general practice*. Maclellan and Petty. Australia.