

Counselling Adolescent Girls: Review Series 1

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Abstract

Nature and nurture are two important factors in the flowering of an individual personality. Adolescence is a period of growth and adolescent girl need counselling with a friendly approach and positive outlook giving scientific facts. Communication is the primary means by which information is exchanged. Adolescent girls have distinct gynecological problems which should be diagnosed and treated promptly because reproductive health problems at this age have potential of affecting not only their own health but also the health of future generation. Confidential doctor-patient relationship is the foundation of counselling adolescent girl. Successful counselling to adolescent girl will take care of medical, social, behavioral and psychological dimension.

Keywords: Adolescence; Counselling; Gynecological Problems; Communication.

Introduction

Nature and nurture are two important factors in the flowering of an individual personality. Like the budding flower, the adolescent girl needs the nurture of a caring environment at home; supported by a friendly, sensitive health system to help her to bloom and mature into healthy womanhood [1].

When a child enters adolescence, she undergoes physical and emotional changes and is confused. She needs understanding, love and concern from her family, teachers and peers.

This is a period of growth and she needs counselling with a friendly approach and positive outlook giving scientific facts. The young girl has to develop self esteem and self confidence and also have a sense of security and support.

Children always follow parental examples. Therefore a harmonious life between children and parents is vital and stepping stone towards good communication. Parents, teachers and doctors continue the chain of communication with these

sensitive adolescents. They should give correct information to fulfill their natural curiosity [2].

Communication is the primary means by which information is exchanged. Counselling should be two way interactive communication process, where participants are invited to respond and seek further information. How well this information can be transmitted and received is a measure of how good our communication skills are.

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood and is characterized by spurt in physical, endocrinal, emotional and mental growth, with a change from complete dependence to relative independence. This age group has distinct gynecological problems such as:

- Dysmenorrhea
- Menstrual disturbances
- Leucorrhoea
- Pain in lower abdomen
- Mastalgia
- Pruritis vulva
- Acne/ hirsutism
- Lump in abdomen
- Problems related to nutrition
 - (i) Under nutrition and anemia
 - (ii) Over nutrition, overweight/obesity [3]
- Teenage pregnancy and child birth
- Reproductive tract infections

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- Genital tract injuries
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Mental health problems: depression, suicide, substance use [4].

These problems should be diagnosed and treated promptly because reproductive health problems at this age have the potential of affecting not only their own health but also the health of their future generation. Adolescent girls in India are traditionally shy and hesitant in discussing gynecological health problems [5].

It has been observed that adolescent girls are reluctant to tell the problems to mother even if mother knows about the problem; she is hesitant to seek gynecological opinion though her daughter is suffering. Why? She is more worried about the social aspect:

- Will someone see my daughter in gynecological OPD?
- What will people think about her disease?

With these social problems, adolescent girls suffer in many ways:-

Delay in access to medical care



Delay in treatment



Worsening of gynecological problems



Affecting psychological and emotional health.

To interrupt this chain of tragic events it is essential to have focus on counselling adolescent girls. This will create security and emotional stability. She will know whom to approach in a given situation.

Discussion

Good communication skills can be developed with some efforts and training and all of us can decide to be counselors to help young girls around us. Consider the possible questions adolescents may ask and be well prepared for counselling through books and visual aids.

Gynecological problems of the adolescents are challenging to the physician. These patients require a kind, sympathetic approach. Confidential doctor patient relationship is the foundation of counselling adolescent girl. The counselor should consider adolescent girl's physical, psychological, social,

cultural and emotional prospective [2]. Several of the behaviors and diseases acquired during adolescence have lifelong consequences.

If reproductive health problems in adolescent girls are neglected, not treated promptly and adequately, it will have future implications on her reproductive health. Sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive tract infections in adolescent period may lead to serious consequences like infertility, ectopic pregnancy [4].

Adolescent should have supportive environment that provides

- Adequate developmental inputs like
 1. Nutrition
 2. Education
 3. Livelihood skills
- Positive close relationship with family, peers.

Adolescents should have information and skills to adopt healthy lifestyle and effective communication with outside world to get support and service when needed.

Adolescent girls should have knowledge about:

- Requirements for health and nutrition.
- Risks to health (example: STI, HIV, Tobacco)
- Information about available services [4].

Adolescence is the most turbulent challenging, stressful phase in the life of teenagers themselves as well as their parents. It is also a period of new discoveries, social and psychological growth to be carried forward for the rest of their life. Gynecologists would meet adolescent girls and their parents who need counselling and treatment regarding adolescent health. Successful counselling to adolescent girl will take care of medical, social, behavioral and psychological dimension.

Conclusion

Adolescent girl is in a phase of life when there are physical, psychological and hormonal changes. This is a crucial period in her life where she is concerned with lifestyle and career choices. In this transitional period, she may have different gynecological problems.

Diagnosis, investigations and treatment modalities in adolescent girl are different than those in woman in reproductive age group. Managing health problems in adolescent girls have many limitations, challenges, difficulties.

Adolescent girl may not reveal her health problems to mother at early stage. Adolescent girl and her mother may not seek guidance and help on issue related to adolescent health from gynecologist. Delay in medical treatment will deteriorate her health. Therefore, counselling to adolescent girl is preventive gynecology. Adolescent girl should be counseled with sympathetic approach, maintaining privacy and confidentiality. It is vital to give her correct information with scientific facts. Thus, counselling adolescent girl ethically is foundation of preserving her health.

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