ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCES IN A MAJOR METROPOLITAN ADULT HOSPITAL WITHIN THE INNER SYDNEY AREA

Cameron N. Ly, MBBS MM FAFRM (RACP), Natalie Menzie RN, Michael Slate OT, Catherine Fung RN.
Department of Adolescent and Transition Medicine, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Missenden Road, Camperdown SYDNEY NSW 2050

Chronic illness is common among adolescents and imposes additional stress for those coping with the maturation process of this age. Transition from a pediatric hospital to an adult hospital can be particularly stressful for adolescents with chronic illness and the understanding of the views and expectations of these patients should assist those who are responsible for the development of health care. The Department of Adolescent and Transition Medicine provides support, education, advocacy, policy and recreation to young patients aged 12 to 24 years old admitted into Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH), a major metropolitan hospital within the inner Sydney area.

Methods

Consecutive young patients with a chronic illness between 12 and 24 years old, who were admitted to an adult ward in RPAH between April 2012 and July 2012, were included in the study. Patients who were admitted to the children’s ward or did not have a chronic illness were excluded. Consent was obtained to interview each patient. Using a standard set of questions and the 5-point Likert scale, information was obtained about the satisfaction of their chronic adolescent experience in an adult hospital. In addition, further comments were compiled regarding their overall satisfaction with their adult hospital experience.

Results

15 patients with a chronic illness were admitted for the first time in a pediatric hospital. Of these, there were 6 males and 9 females. The average age was 19.5, ranging from 16 to 23 years old. 4 patients had cystic fibrosis, 2 had cancers, 2 had diabetes mellitus, and the remaining 7 had various other chronic illnesses.

For 11 out of these 15 patients, it was their first time in an adult hospital. In the 15 patients, their satisfaction with their previous level of support was 93% (4.67/5.0) and their satisfaction with the adult ward setup as 76% (3.8/5.0). Their satisfaction with the treatment by medical staff was 88% (4.4/5.0), nursing staff was 91% (4.53/5.0), and other hospital staff was 81% (4.07/5.0). Their satisfaction with recreational diversions was 81% (4.07/5.0), their comfort level in sharing their environment was 61% (3.07/5.0) and their overall satisfaction was 80% (4.0/5.0).

Discussion

Most patients in the study came from a previous background of good social support. They felt well treated by hospital staff and were satisfied with their recreational diversions, although many were somewhat disappointed about the adult ward setup. Many were uncomfortable sharing their environment with older patients, and three felt very uncomfortable sharing their bathroom. Some adolescents in the study reported the adult hospital “dehumanized” them and they were not provided with much information during their admission.

Conclusion

As can be seen, therefore, the transition of adolescents with a chronic illness from the pediatric hospital to the adult hospital remains an important issue, causing significant psychological stress. It is important that social, educational and economic advocacy on behalf of adolescents and their health continue to be a priority.

References: