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Transition health care for adolescents

The American Academy of Paediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American College of Physicians have updated their collective 2011 clinical guidance in a new report, Supporting the Health Care Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood in the Medical Home. According to new data, a health-care transition plan is in place for only 17% of American adolescents who have special health-care needs and for only 14% of adolescents who do not have special needs.

Health-care needs in adolescence span prevention to treatment of acute, emerging, and long-term conditions. Care needs to focus on the adolescent person and their wider family and be reflected in appropriate health-system infrastructure. Quality of care during the transition into adulthood affects health-care uptake, quality of life, educational achievement, and overall wellbeing. For the 1% of adolescents with severe, complex health conditions, continuity of health care into adulthood can be challenging alongside other life transitions during adolescence (eg, leaving education, leaving home, and parenthood).

The guidance presents the Six Core Elements of Health Care Transition—evidence-led packages that rely on communication between stakeholders across different aspects of health-care provision. The packages are designed for paediatric practices transferring care to adult practices, adult practices taking over care from adolescent care providers, and family general practices continuing to provide care across the lifespan. Each package focuses on the importance of preparation, transfer, and integration into adult health care and recognises that patient-centred care for adolescents and young adults means attending to their needs, while appreciating the importance of family.

Focusing on health transition is a welcome step for adolescent health in the USA and will address the alarming shortfall in transition planning. The principles and benefits of preparation, transfer, and integration are universal, but the challenges in managing these transitions will be considerable in countries without such infrastructure or resources, severely limiting the global potential of the recommendations. ■ The Lancet

World Flu Day: momentum from China for influenza control

Nov 1 marks the first World Flu Day and was formally launched at the Asian-Pacific Centenary Spanish 1918-flu symposium in Shenzhen, China. The campaign was developed by George F Gao, director of the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with other leading influenza specialists, including Yoshihiro Kawaoka from University of Wisconsin, WI, USA, Mark von Itzstein from Griffith University, QLD, Australia, and Kwok-Yung Yuen from Hong Kong University, Hong Kong. Gao told The Lancet that World Flu Day had four major purposes: to commemorate the centenary of the 1918–19 influenza pandemic; to raise public awareness of influenza; to accelerate scientific innovation and basic research efforts toward remaining challenges of influenza, particularly the development of a universal flu vaccine; and to push for stronger global political will in continuing the support of influenza prevention and control.

Unlike official global health campaigns such as World Health Day and World Tuberculosis Day, marked and sponsored by WHO, the proposal and implementation of World Flu Day are mainly driven by scientists who work on unsolved questions in influenza research. Furthermore, the major organising institution in the influenza campaign this year is China CDC. 2018 also marks the 15-year commemoration of the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak, after which strengthening the CDC became the top priority in China’s public policy agenda. As a result, China boosted investment in the public health system, strengthening national and local surveillance systems for all infectious diseases more efficiently and effectively, and improving research capacity, especially for emerging infectious diseases.

In the changing landscape of global health, China has increased its global health engagement and influence through health aid, health security, health governance, and knowledge exchange. Historical lessons from influenza should remain at the core of global efforts for pandemic preparedness. Launching the first World Flu Day in China is not just a timely call for raising global awareness about this common and easily ignored disease, but also an important opportunity for China to strengthen global collaboration in influenza research and control. ■ The Lancet