

EDITORIAL

The Importance of Research and Clinical Care for Adolescent and Young Adult Health and Well-Being



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Today adolescents and young adults face tremendous choices and challenges with respect to their physical and mental health and well-being. Some of the issues they face are universal, whereas others place a disproportionate burden on certain demographic subgroups based on familial, cultural, socioeconomic, and political circumstances. Their environments are shaped profoundly by the presence or absence of many factors, including family resources, community services, disease burden, and educational and employment opportunities. Adolescence and young adulthood is a time of increased need for health care services but is paradoxically a time of lower use.

Regardless of community constellation or socioeconomic status, the youth population presents *the* opportune time for the health system to intervene through health promotion, education, research, and treatment. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine's Consensus Committee on Adolescent Health Care Services and Models of Care for Treatment, Prevention and Healthy Development (2009)¹ reviewed the current state of services for young people and identified major gaps in our knowledge about how to improve their health and well-being and prevent disease, suggesting ways to enhance and improve the systems that support adolescent health promotion and care. The report concluded that the most high-functioning health systems are those that confidentially provide a continuum of high-quality, community-based, developmentally appropriate services and supports to at-risk and high-need adolescents while simultaneously generating knowledge about health promotion and risk reduction. Ironically, those adolescents and young adults who might most benefit from advances in our knowledge—youth of color, poor youth,

sexual minority youth, and so on—are the very groups that are not adequately represented in research.

The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center (MSAHC) is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2018. For 50 years, a cadre of competent and highly trained practitioners has worked with adolescents and young adults aged 10–24, regardless of their ability to pay or their insurance status. The center provides confidential, comprehensive, and integrated medical, sexual, and reproductive health, dental, optical, behavioral, and mental health, prevention, and support services. The MSAHC team delivers appropriate support at the right time to ensure better health outcomes for young people and to reduce any long-term negative consequences resulting from harmful behaviors.

Research is also an integral element of the MSAHC health care delivery model. A robust research program has been integrated into the MSAHC clinical model for more than 10 years. The MSAHC research program practices and reports inform clinical protocols, generate knowledge about our target population, and provide a blueprint for designing new, more effective interventions to address health maladies. MSAHC recognizes that only through extensive research, training, and collaboration with international researchers and institutions can it achieve the goal of creating the most innovative research and game-changing clinical practice to transform the field of young people's health care.

This special issue highlights papers from researchers, both domestic and international, on issues covering a broad range of topics—adolescent health and rights, teen parenting, trauma and abuse, mental health and HIV, sexual and reproductive health, school-based health, and telemedicine. The authors of the special issue share a deep passion for adolescent health and

well-being and have worked tirelessly to advocate for adolescent and adult-centered care. It is our hope that the information included in these papers will help transform thinking on how research and clinical practice can broaden our knowledge of adolescents and young adults.

REFERENCE

1. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Consensus Committee on Adolescent Health Care Services and Models of Care for Treatment, Prevention and Healthy Development. 2009. Adolescent Health Services: Missing Opportunities. The National Research Council/Institute of Medicine's (2009).