

PARTICIPATION OF NURSING SPECIALISTS IN OBSERVATIONS OF ADOLESCENTS WITH CHRONIC DISORDERS IN THE OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT

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Introduction

Communication between adolescents with chronic disorders and healthcare professionals can be difficult at times. Adolescents often do not take the lead in conversations.

Aim and Methods

We examined self-care competencies of adolescents with chronic disorders in the paediatric outpatient department. Nursing specialists acted as co-researchers, assisting in the development of research instruments, the selection of participants, and making the observations. A total of 39 consultations of 30 adolescents (12-22 years) with paediatricians, nurses, and a dietician at various outpatient clinics at the Erasmus MC-Sophia Children's Hospital were observed. Conversations were recorded and the observers rated the adolescents' competencies on an observational form. Adolescents were briefly interviewed before and after consultations. All participants gave their informed consent. Preliminary results were discussed in 3 heterogeneous focus groups with 27 healthcare professionals. Data analysis was performed with ATLAS-ti and SPSS.

Results

Adolescents, particularly those under 16, expect healthcare professionals to take the lead during consultations, although professionals try to redirect the conversation towards adolescents. Most adolescents are accompanied by their parents, whose role is important: parents report, clarify, interpret and sometimes dominate the conversation. Younger adolescents tend to "let the parents do the driving". Adolescents who are self-managing their disease or who are visiting the outpatient clinics on their own are more communicative and more competent. Conversational styles between nurses and doctors showed only few differences. Nursing specialists experienced their role as co-researchers as positive and by making the observations developed many ideas to improve their own practice.

Conclusions

The passive role of adolescents during consultations is encouraged by the fixed structure of medical and nursing consultations. Healthcare professionals could change this by making consultations more patient-directed and by influencing the parents' role. Active involvement in a practice-oriented research project helps nursing specialists to improve the quality of their own care.

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