

Appropriateness of gatekeeping in provision of reproductive health care for adolescents in Lithuania: *General practitioners' perspective*

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Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping concerns the first patient's contact with the health care system.

Gatekeeper:

- provide primary health care services
- coordinate health care by referring his patients to the specialists

Advantages of gatekeeping:

- reduce of health expenditures
- improvement of health outcomes

Background

- Introduction of general practice in 1992 and gatekeeping system in 1997
- Lack of researches of effectiveness of gatekeeping
- Low adolescents' satisfaction with GPs as reproductive health providers

Aim of the study

Exploration general practitioners' ***experience*** in adolescents' reproductive health care and their ***perceptions on appropriateness*** of gatekeeping in adolescents' reproductive health care.

Methodology

- Sample - 20 general practitioners
variety of age, working place, training experience
- Method - non structured in depth interviews
first question: “Could you tell me about some of the latest adolescents’ consultations that were related with sexual or reproductive health issues?”
- *Analysis of data using grounded theory*

Results

1. Lack of *willingness* to provide reproductive health services for teens
 2. Insufficient *training*
 3. Inadequate *equipment* of offices
 4. Low perceived *support* for reproductive health services provision
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Lack of willingness due to:

- ***discomfort*** felt by physicians in discussing sexuality related questions
- ***low prioritization*** of sexual and reproductive health issues in the primary health care
- ***legal uncertainty*** of physicians-teenage patient- parents' relationship

Training in reproductive health

Gaps in knowledge:

- *“escaped, [...] not scheduled [...], not emphasized” (GP9F) issues during training*

Lack of skills:

- *“every time performing gynecological examination I feel tension” (GP11F)*

Equipment of GPs offices

- Lack of gynecologic equipment
- “Geographical remoteness” of gynecologic examination area

Perceived support for reproductive health services provision

- Reluctance of patients
- Lack of support from policy level
- Negative support from colleagues

“I saw – nobody do this work [...] of family physician (do not provide reproductive health services). They (other GPs) said to me “Are you crazy?” (GP7F).

Conclusions

- Struggling factors for adolescents' reproductive health care concern physicians', health settings' and policy levels
- Complex measures should be applied aiming overcome identified barriers
- Flexible model of gatekeeping, encompassing both co-ordination of care provided by primary health care physician and possibility of patients' self-referral should be discussed.

Thank you!

