

27 March 2012

'Improving young people's health outcomes - Research into practice'

Cardiff's Millennium Stadium

This conference was run in conjunction with the Royal College of GPs' Adolescent Health Group, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Welsh Government and DECIPHer.

Prior to attending this conference I attended a Parenting Talk by Dr John Coleman OBE, as part of my role in School Nursing. He is a clinical psychologist, including young people's health, emotional health and well-being, and the learning environments of young people. He is a founder member and Chair of The Association for Young People's Health (AYPH). This initial talk focused on improving the engagement between adolescents and their parents, he focused on personality clashes between young people and their parents. It was an excellent talk. In my 10 years as a paediatric nurse this has been the age group that I have most enjoyed working with. Dr Coleman mentioned the conference and AYPH. I hoped it would demonstrate how this age group is finally becoming recognised in a practical way. Following on from this talk I wrote to FPSA to ask for funding for this one day course. They very kindly paid for me to attend.

AYPH aims to bring together professionals and organisations working to improve young people's health and well-being. By sharing learning, reporting current research and best practice they aim to promote and provide better services to meet young people's health needs. Their website is a great source for up to date information and research. <http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/tier.aspx?id=1>

The day was very well organised, once I found how to get into the stadium! Practically the venue was excellent, as were the refreshments provided. I felt the venue raised the events profile, purely because it is one of Cardiff's great landmarks.

The presentation was by ALPHA (Advice Leading to Public Health Advancement) a group of young people who have been advising researchers on engaging young people in their projects. The young people were excellent, and having worked on a similar project, reflected

what we have found. I think it was very relevant for the majority of professionals present as it was the young people voicing their needs and opinions, an excellent opening. We then heard about policies affecting children in our host country, which echoed issues we were all aware of and reminded us of why young people's needs should be met.

We then had a talk from Professor Chris Bonell. This was an excellent talk and can be viewed on the website link below. All are in agreement that young people are under a lot of stress and that their health needs to be improved. This talk focused on schools playing a role in this. A subject close to me heart. I have worked in schools for the last two years and the schools I work in have good pastoral care; school nurses are involved in this. However, this talk did not address the role of parents and young people want to improve their health outcomes. From personal experience, I have found that putting young people in conflict with their parents own health beliefs is the biggest cause of them not achieving a healthy body and mind. One to one work with young people who would like to improve their own health outcomes, with regard to smoking, dental hygiene, obesity and exercise, and mental health issues, have all been seen to fail due to lack of parental support and even parental hostility. I felt this was not addressed in the talk. Schools do not have the ability to take on parenting roles to the extent some young people need. The health team involved, namely school nurses do not have the status or the access to funding to achieve this, and I believe with the right support behind, young people would access the service more. For me I feel the role of the school nurse could be expanded to address some of these issues with young people and their parents. After this talk a number of professionals approached me to discuss my personal experience, which may mean school nurses skills might be utilised more.

The next sessions were organised into two lots of parallel sessions which limited the talks we could attend. This information was provided beforehand so I was not forced to quickly make a decision which was good, but I did feel the groupings did not allow me to see all the talks relevant to my interests and work.

I attended Parallel Sessions 2 and 3. The talks were all of interest. Parallel Session 2 covered area pertaining to school nursing, but all covered information that was also familiar to me. No new information was really highlighted.

The most interesting session for me was in Parallel Session 3. This was regarding the youth friendly GP care, which has led to funding for 10 practices for three years in order to determine what young people need. This talk highlighted how the GP had set up their first practice, involving young people from the beginning and involving them in the building layout as well as the service design. It was a brilliant talk, but again highlighted to me the lack of multi disciplinary work in the community. No paediatric nurses were involved in this project.

This conference was brilliantly organised, and has shown that the health of young people needs to be urgently addressed. But, I feel it demonstrated that we are still not collaborating and combining skills in the most resourceful way. Much of what was addressed in this conference has been addressed by many different organisations in many different ways. Evidence based practice seems to be spread out in the community, and we are all doing our best rather than combining an excellent skill set to produce excellent outcomes that are consistent and evidence based.

I have been a paediatric Nurse since 2001. In the hospitals we are now recognised as an authority on promoting and supporting young people and their families, and their health outcomes. Our three years of training focuses only on the under 18's, and we can only work within this remit. Any adult nurses entering the hospital setting must spend an additional year training to work with this age group. In the community this does not apply. The majority of school nurses do not hold any form of children's nursing qualification. This again undermines the specific and specialised health needs of this age group.

I believe until we address this discrepancy and work with much needed evidence based practice we will not achieve good health outcomes for young people. As in the hospital setting health is about family centred care, promoting health in the community requires a huge shift in this direction. We must engage families in their children's health in order to allow children the means to improve their own outcomes.

This conference introduced me to the huge numbers of professionals wanting to work towards improving the health of young people. The professional experiential learning was invaluable for all of us who attended.

AYPH is a brilliant source of information and I have no doubt will become a primary lead in improving health outcomes in the United Kingdom.

AYPH LINK

The conference presentations are downloadable:

<http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/tier.aspx?page=68&id=4>

First Plenary Session

- The ALPHA (young people's panel) introductory presentation
- Dr Tony Jewell, CMO for Wales Children's health policy in Wales
- Professor Chris Bonell, Oxford Uni 'Missing the many, harming the few'

Parallel session 1: vulnerable groups

- Mooney - Young people with cancer
- Cameron - looked after young people
- Fallon et al - teenage mothers in supported tenancies

Parallel session 2: health promotion

- Young and Churchill - sexual health advice texting service
- Crichton et al, Chlamydia screening
- Campbell and Moore - ASSIST smoking prevention

Parallel Session 3: young people's participation in service development

- Davies - Voices for Safe Choices
- Lamb and Poyton - The Well Centre
- Fletcher et al, INCLUSIVE project

Parallel Session 4: risk in health behaviour

- Hummel et al, family functioning, pubertal timing & substance use
- Culpin et al - father absence and depressive symptoms
- Brooks et al - HBSC, assets approach

Final Plenary

Dr Simon Murphy 'Bringing policy, practice and research together to improve school health
Young people's closing film (to follow)

