Adolescent Mental Health: An Overview

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Presentation Summary

- Mental Health in Adolescence
- Prevalence of Mental Health Problems
- Mental Health Care Services: Screening, Treatment and other Concerns
Mental Health in Adolescence

Adolescence is a critical period to identify and treat mental health problems

• Symptoms of half of lifetime diagnosable problems appear by age 14

• This figure increases to three quarters by age 24

• Anxiety disorders and impulse disorders have the earliest average age of onset (11 years)

• Depression is the most widely reported disorder

Source: Kessler et al., 2005; Rushton et al., 2002
Mental Health in Adolescence: Positive Function

- Relatively little focus on positive mental health
- What do teens need to thrive, form healthy relationships, and be happy and engaged citizens?

Source: see Knopf et al., 2008 for discussion and references
Prevalence of Mental Health Problems

- Overview
- Focus on depression & suicide
- Co-morbidity
Prevalence: Overview

- About one in five adolescents experience significant symptoms of emotional distress
- Nearly one in ten are emotionally impaired

Source: see Knopf et al., 2008 for discussion and references
Prevalence: Measurement

Strict clinical definitions difficult to monitor nationally. Measures here represent a combination of:

- Broad questions of functioning and emotional distress
- More formal assessment, including standardized scales
- Information on receipt of services for problems related to mental health
Reasons for Treatment, Adolescents (Ages 12-17) Receiving Past-Year Treatment, 2007

- Felt depressed: 50.0%
- Breaking rules/acting out: 25.1%
- Family/home problems: 28.8%
- School-related problems: 17.2%
- Felt afraid or tense: 17.9%
- Thought about or attempted suicide: 20.2%
- Friend-related problems: 12.1%
- Anger control: 16.8%
- Other reasons: 10.7%
- Eating problems: 9.7%
- Physical fight: 5.4%
- Mental disorder diagnosis: 2.3%

Source: SAMHSA - NSDUH, 2007
Prevalence: Selected Disorders, Ages 7-16, 1989 & 1999

Source: Achenbach et al., 2003, cited in Knopf et al., 2008
Depression and Suicide: Major Depressive Episode (MDE), Ages 12-17, 2007

Source: SAMHSA - NSDUH, 2007
Depression and Suicide: Sadness or Hopelessness, H.S. Students, 2007

Source: CDC - YRBS, 2007
Depression and Suicide: Attempted Suicide, H.S. Students, 2007

Source: CDC - YRBS, 2007
Depression and Suicide: Suicide Mortality, Ages 15-19, 2006

Source: NCIPC, 2006
Major Depression & Co-morbidity

- 76% with major depression also had other diagnoses, two thirds of which preceded the depression diagnosis (ages 15-20, 1992).*

- Previous diagnoses among the 76% include:*
  - Anxiety disorders (40%)
  - Conduct disorders (25%)
  - Addictive disorders (12%)

- Depression also linked to risky behaviors such as unsafe sexual activity and fighting and weapon carrying.**

Source: *Kessler, 1998; **Ozer et al., 2009
Screening and Treatment

Low Rates of screening and treatment

- 31% in a California sample (females 37.5% vs. males, 25.1%; ages 12-17, 2003)*

- 39% of adolescents with MDE in past-year received treatment; varies tremendously by insurance**

Sources: * Ozer et al., 2009; **SAMHSA, 2009
Received Treatment Among those with Past-Year MDE, Ages 12-17, 2007

Sources: SAMHSA, 2009
Mental Health Services: Concerns

- Reimbursement policies & MH “carve-outs” that discourage screening in primary care
- Benefit packages that limit service, especially outpatient services (e.g., number of visits)
- Limitations of mental health parity laws
- Lack of trained adolescent MH providers

Sources: Kapphahn et al., 2006; Fox et al., 2003
References & Resources


References & Resources


- Ozer et al., 2009. Are Adolescents Being Screened for Emotional Distress in Primary Care? Available at: http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(08)00685-X/abstract

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- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables Online. Available at: http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k7NSDUH/tabs/TOC.htm.

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