

TEACHER NOTES+

Teacher notes to support use of
the Youth Friendly General
Practice video in the classroom

Video available at
reachout.com

**TEACHER NOTES FOR YOUTH FRIENDLY GENERAL PRACTICE
VIDEO RESOURCE****Learning outcomes**

Students will learn about:

- The broad (holistic) role of the General Practitioner (GP)
- How to access a GP
- Confidentiality in health care

This teacher resource provides activities for students in Stages 4 and 5 to support the use of the Youth Friendly General Practice video in the classroom. These teacher notes may be utilised in conjunction with school based units of work or in isolation. Teaching and learning activities have been suggested to support the Youth Friendly General Practice video resource for both stages.

Introduction

The Youth Friendly General Practice video resource aims to encourage, engage, educate and support young people to access GPs.

Many of the major risks to the health of young people are psychosocial in nature, yet the reasons for consulting GPs are often for skin and respiratory problems. Research shows that young people trust GPs and are willing to discuss psychosocial health concerns, but may be reluctant to raise more sensitive issues themselves. GPs in turn may be uncertain about raising more sensitive issues with their young patients.

In the video resource, we see a narrator, Amy, who asks questions about accessing a General Practice and follows a young person who consults a GP to find out about how General Practice works. The resource features work by an award winning cinematographer.

Amy explains:

1. That young people can ask a GP any questions relating to health and wellbeing
2. That young people can choose their own GP and find a youth friendly one
3. Using the Medicare card and cost of GP services
4. That young people are entitled to confidential health care, with certain exceptions
5. That young people can make choices about their health care

The Youth Friendly General Practice video resource and teaching notes can be accessed at reachout.com.

Stage 4 Teaching And Learning Program

<p>Students learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking help <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits of support – Identifying people and services that provide support – Accessing support – Strategies for seeking support – Supporting others to seek help – Barriers to accessing support • Accessing health information, products and services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sources of health information, eg family, peers, school, internet, media, GP – range of products, services and personnel available – factors influencing access, eg culture, location – reasons for preferred services and products 	<p>Students learn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance their ability to seek help by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Establishing individual support networks of adults and peers – Practising ways of accessing help, e.g. role-play, use of internet – Identifying barriers to seeking support, e.g. lack of confidentiality, trust – Proposing strategies to overcome barriers • Identify health information, products and services designed to address the health needs of young people, eg mental health, youth health services • Examine strategies to improve access to health information, products and services
<p>Teaching and Learning Activities</p> <p>The Youth Friendly General Practice resource encourages young people to seek support for health concerns by visiting their GP. The following activities may be used prior to showing the clip:</p> <p>Lead In Activities:</p> <p>1) <i>Teacher talk:</i> There are always times when we need to seek help from others, this is important for all people but even more important for young people as they navigate the challenges of growing up. When you think of people who support you, what kinds of people do you think of? How many of us would think of health professionals? How often do you think young people would access a health professional?</p> <p>Student activity sheet – Seeking help - What does a health professional do? - Resource #1</p>	<p>Resources</p> <p>Student activity sheet – Seeking help - What does a health professional do? – Resource #1</p>

- 2) Think, pair, share – Think: ask students to list down five reasons why they may need to seek support from a health professional. Pair: students combine with one another and combine their list to have a total of five occasions they may need to seek support. Share: as a class when would we be most likely to seek support from a health professional?

Add the combined lists (from each pair) to <http://www.wordle.net> and produce a word cloud identifying the main reasons why young people may seek help from a health professional. Reflect on whether these reasons are similar to those students listed in activity 1.

- 3) Where do young people go for their health information?

Discuss with class – do you think young people are going to health professionals for health information? Why? Why not?

If young people are not going to a health professional where are they going?

Are other sources of information like friends and family always accurate? Why? Why not?

- 4) Looking at the statistics: ask students how many times they think each young person would have visited the doctor over the last year?

According the 2011 report **Young Australians: Their Health and Wellbeing** ([accessed http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737419261](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737419261)):

- There were 12.25 million general practice encounters for young people, an average rate of 3.2 encounters per person a 20% decline since 1998–99.
- Overall, young females were more likely to attend general practice consultations than young males (4.0 and 2.4 encounters per person, respectively)
- The rate of general practice encounters was lower among 12–14 year olds than among 20–24 year olds (2.3 and 3.7 encounters per person, respectively).

Discuss: Why do you think the rate of general practice visits have declined? Why would young females be more likely to go than young males? Why would older people be more likely to go to the doctor?

Socio-Cultural Perspective: Access to health services (Teacher Notes)

- 1) Rural and remote areas

Discuss with students the differences in access for people living in rural and remote areas within Australia. Australia's overall ratio of doctors is 3 per 1000 people, yet in rural and remote areas this is closer to 1.7 doctors per 1000 people. If you are a rural school consider how this affects people within your community – can they go to the local hospital for treatment and live at home? Can their family stay with them? If you are in a metropolitan area consider how the variety of services affects access – are young people more likely to visit a GP? Do other issues affect their access?

Would a young person in a rural and remote area be more afraid of people finding out about their health concerns? Why? Why not?

Wordle:
<http://www.wordle.net>

Young
Australians:
their health and
wellbeing 2011

Australia's
Workforce
Series: Doctors
in Focus 2012
(Health
Workforce
Australia:
Adelaide

2) Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations

Ask students to think about those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds and whether these young people have equal access to health services? What might be needed to ensure they can access health services? Students and teachers may wish to explore the health challenges facing those from other cultural backgrounds at: <http://www.abc.net.au/health/consumerguides/stories/2003/04/03/1837445.htm>.

Q: How can culture create a barrier to health access?

Q: When does gender of the doctor matter, and for who?

Q: Are there services to support people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds to access health care?

3) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: many students may be aware of the significant gap between the life expectancy of Aboriginal Australians and Non Aboriginal Australians. Discuss major factors, which may have contributed to this gap and ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to be disadvantaged in terms of access to health care. Students should be aware of specific services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the reasons for their existence: <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/health/>

Teaching and Learning Activities

Resources

Watch the Youth Friendly General Practice Video – Available URL:

Show the video and discuss using key video content – teaching notes have been provided. Teachers may wish to pause the video in order to discuss the issues raised by the presenter. It should be noted that the young people “Amy and Matt” used in the video are role models for young people in the future and the information contained is not entirely directed toward Stage 4 students. The emphasis of this teaching program is on “Seeking Help and Access to Medical Services.”

Youth Friendly General Practice – Student Handout

Follow up activities:

- 1) After viewing the resource once show it again and divide the class into groups. Each group is now responsible for using the information presented in the video to address one of the barriers which may prevent young people from accessing a GP:

Youth Friendly General Practice Video

Youth Friendly General Practice Student Handout

- Confidentiality
- Lack of support
- Cost
- Access to a doctor
- Trust

Each group will complete a worksheet to record their discussion around the following discussion questions:

1. How would this barrier prevent a young person from accessing a GP?
2. How was the barrier addressed in the video?
3. Describe how this information could help more young people to overcome the barrier?
4. Prepare a short role play using this barrier and the information you have gathered:
 - a. Person 1 says – “I couldn’t see a GP because _____ (insert the barrier)”
 - b. Person 2 says – “Well actually did you know _____ (insert the information gathered)”
5. In what other ways could you present this information to young people?

Group activity sheet – Overcoming barriers - Helping young people to see GPs - Resource #2

Groups are then invited to present their discussions to the class.

2) Practising ways of accessing support: Class role play

For this activity it may be useful to organise the front of the classroom to replicate a doctors surgery with a receptionist desk to the side, a place for patients to approach, a waiting room and a separate doctors room. Props like a medical coat or doctors tools may be useful.

Introduce the doctors practice out the front of the room and ask for volunteers to play the role of the receptionist and doctor. Issue 3-4 patient cards to different people in the room which list a concern they are having that they wish to speak to the doctor about. Invite students to approach the receptionists one at a time and wait to be called into the doctors office. After each visit you change the doctor and discuss what we can learn from the way each student approaches the doctor.

A “friend” and “parent” character has been added to the role play in order to discuss how we can support one another to access support, these can be used as appropriate.

Student activity sheet – Role play – Seeing the doctor - Resource #3

Discussion questions:

- Are there some things that are easy to discuss with a doctor? What might they include?
- What things are harder to discuss? How can we approach these?
- Why is it important to develop strategies to talk to a doctor about these issues?
- Why is it important to be open with our parents about visiting a doctor or any health concerns we may have?
- Why is this sometimes very hard to do? How can we make it easier?
- How might friends support each other to discuss issues with a doctor?
- What can you do as a friend to support someone to speak to a doctor about the difficult health issues?

Group Activity Sheet – Overcoming barriers - Helping young people to see GPs – Resource #2

Student activity sheet – Role play – Seeing the doctor – Resource #3

Stage Progression: These activities are designed to lead into Stage 5 activities around the Youth Friendly General Practice resource. Many of the activities recommended for Stage 4 could be replicated in Stage 5 in order to provide older students the skills required to access a GP if and when required.

It is important that teachers are aware of the information around confidentiality and access to health care as provided on the next page. When watching the video resource it should be noted that students in Stage 4 are not guaranteed confidential access and should involve their parents in health decision making whenever possible.

Stage 5 Teaching And Learning Program

Stage progression: The Youth Friendly General Practice video resource is most relevant for Stage 5 students who may be over the age of 15 years and able to access a GP independently. If the resource is used in isolation with Stage 5 it may be useful to incorporate activities suggested for Stage 4 including the Overcoming Barriers activity and the Health Concerns role playing activity.

Students learn about:

- **The nature of health knowledge**
 - Changes in health knowledge and keeping current
 - Dealing with uncertainty
 - Accessing accurate information
- **Factors influencing access to health information, products and services by young people**
 - Confidentiality
 - Trust in patient/provider relationship
 - Embarrassment in disclosing health concerns
 - Young people's rights to health care
 - Knowledge of services available, what services offer and how they can be accessed
 - Skills to access health information, products and services
 - Availability of health information, products and services

Students learn to:

- Identify how and why health knowledge has changed and propose actions that may assist young people to manage the constantly changing nature of health information
- Locate health and support services in the local area that promote and maintain the health and wellbeing of young people, e.g. routine health care, crisis accommodation, support for pregnant and parenting students, counselling regarding problem gambling
- Discuss the reasons why young people do not use health services as much as other groups. Propose strategies to encourage young people to access appropriate health services
- Account for how differences in accessing help might be related to age, gender and geographic location

The following health issues have been selected as a context for this resource. Other health issues from Outcome 4.6 may be used in a similar way.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understanding mental health – Help-seeking behaviours – Reaching out: helping yourself and helping others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge negative community perceptions of mental health and identify reasons why these have developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sexual choices and their consequences – Planning and managing sexual health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and evaluate safe sexual health practices, including methods of contraception

Teaching and Learning Activities	Resources
<p>Lead in activities:</p> <p>The Youth Friendly General Practice resource encourages young people to seek support for health conditions by visiting their General Practitioner (GP). The following activities may be used prior to showing the clip:</p> <p>1) The nature of health knowledge: Discuss how the nature of health knowledge has changed in recent times and consider why this may be the case. Q: Have disease and illness always been viewed the same way? Q: Are all treatments the same as in the past? Q: Why do things change? Q: How can we stay up to date with changes?</p> <p>Ask students to think about health conditions for which the treatment has completely changed during recent times. Discuss examples of where technology has improved treatment for disease or illness.</p> <p>Ask students to identify how and why health knowledge has changed and propose actions that may assist young people to manage the constantly changing nature of health information. This task is included on a student activity sheet:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student activity sheet – The nature of health information – Resource #1</p> <p>Activity sheet concludes with a challenge for young people around accessing a GP or other medical professional in order to remain up to date with health information. Q: Where do young people usually seek their health information from?</p> <p>2) The World Wide Web: This activity asks the class to use Dr. Google to find a diagnosis and treatment for a given health condition. The activity sheet provides 5 health issues and instructions for students.</p> <p>Follow up discussion: When the class has finished the activity ask them to consider how accurate the information they accessed was? Did they all find the same information for the same condition? What does one need to consider when using the internet for health information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could going to a GP allow us to find accurate health information? • Why would young people hesitate? • Are there health sites online that young people can rely on? <p style="text-align: center;">Student activity sheet – Dr. Google - Resource #2</p>	<p>Student activity sheet – The nature of health information – Resource #1</p> <p>Student activity sheet – Dr. Google – Resource #2</p>

3) Would you ask a GP?

Following on from the previous activity ask young people to think about accessing the services of a GP to gain the same information. Consider both the benefits of seeking help from a GP and the barriers that may prevent young people from accessing help in this way.

- Q: How many people in the class have been to a GP in the last 6 months?
- Q: How many people have been to a GP more than once?
- Q: How many people have searched for something health related on the internet?
- Q: How many times have you done this? Once? Twice? Weekly?
- Q: Which would you trust more?

Discuss why people may be more likely to access the internet for health information rather than a health professional. Acknowledge issues of privacy and confidentiality and discuss how this unit of work is about exploring the concept of a “Youth Friendly GP” and how it can be much easier than we think to get sound medical advice.

Considering Barriers to Access

The following activity has been taken from the Stage 4 resource for Youth Friendly General Practice; it can be used with students in Stage 5 as an effective pre learning activity to the video resource requiring students to apply their prior knowledge and critical thinking skills to a consideration of the barriers young people face in accessing health care:

As a class list the barriers, which may prevent young people from accessing health care. Which ones are most important?

Teacher to highlight the following as major barriers affecting access to health care, others may be added by the class.

- Confidentiality
- Lack of support
- Cost
- Access to a doctor
- Trust

Divide the class into small groups and allocate each group one of the barriers above. Groups are then tasked with considering a range of questions about the barrier they have been allocated. These questions include:

1. How would this barrier prevent a young person from accessing a GP?
2. How was the barrier addressed in the video?
3. Describe how this information could help more young people to overcome the barrier?
4. Prepare a short role play using this barrier and the information you have gathered:
 - a. Person 1 says – “I couldn’t see a GP because _____ (insert the barrier)”
 - b. Person 2 says – “Well actually did you know _____ (insert the information gathered)”
5. In what other ways could you present this information to young people?

Stage 4 Group Activity Sheet – Overcoming barriers - helping young people to see GPs

Group activity sheet – Overcoming barriers – Resource #3

As a group prepare a short video clip to present the information you have discussed. Try and create a youth friendly video clip which will encourage young people to think about accessing health care and overcoming barriers. Use <http://www.dvolver.com/moviemaker/make.html>. For an alternative activity if the class is unable to access a recording device, see Stage 4 Resource #3.

Group activity sheet – Overcoming barriers – Helping young people to see GPs - Resource #3

If these activities have already been completed with the students, consider follow on questions such as:

- What are some specific barriers that would prevent a young person accessing a GP?
- Are young people worried about confidentiality? Why? Would people in rural and remote areas be more worried?
- Why would young people suffer from a lack of support? Who should support them? How?
- Do young people have to pay to visit a GP? How much?
- Do all young people have the same access to health services?
- Is it easy to trust someone that you don't know? Do young people generally trust health professionals?

4) **Youth Friendly General Practice** – in preparation for viewing the video ask students to complete the following activity sheet by filling in the table column marked “before the video”. This column asks students to consider their impressions about GPs around the following areas, **before** they have viewed the video.

Many of these barriers would be discussed and addressed by groups who complete the above Barriers to Access activity designed for Stage 4.

Student activity sheet – Youth Friendly General Practice – Resource #4

- Confidentiality
- Trust in patient/provider relationship
- Embarrassment in disclosing health concerns
- Young people's rights to health care
- Knowledge of services available, what services offer and how they can be accessed
- Skills to access health information, products and services

Discuss the considerations above as a class or small group before watching the video. How does the class generally feel about going to see a GP? Is it something that lots of people would do/have done recently?

Website:
Dvolver Movie
Maker

Student activity
sheet – Youth
Friendly
General
Practice –
Resource #4

Watch the Youth Friendly General Practice Video – Available URL:

Show the video and discuss using key video content – teaching notes

Follow up activities:

- 1) Divide students into smaller groups of 3-4 students. Then ask them to work together to complete the other half of the worksheet in relation to Youth Friendly General Practice.

Youth Friendly General Practice – Activity Sheet – Resource #4

Ask the group to use the worksheet to discuss the information presented in the video. Were any aspects surprising to the students? Was any new information presented? Did the students already know everything that the presenter talked about? How did they find it out?

- Ask students whether their perception of the role of a GP was changed in relation to confidentiality, trust, embarrassment or rights?
- Are you more or less likely to see a GP after seeing this video? Why?
- Did you know that you could see a GP for any health concern?
- Did you know that going to see the GP was confidential?
- Why is health information usually confidential?

- 2) Class discussion around other aspects of the video. Some aspects of the video may not be covered in the worksheet. Following a discussion of the above cover the following topics with your class as needed:

- Did you know how to go about finding a doctor and making an appointment (knowledge)?
- How confident are you now to go and see a doctor? Are you more likely to see one after seeing this clip?
- What would you do if the receptionist asks for your Medicare card?
- What can you do to get the most out of an appointment with a doctor?
- What kinds of problems can a young person consult a GP about?
- What is a Medicare card? What is it for?

Youth Friendly General Practice – Student Handout

Youth Friendly
General
Practice Video

Student activity
sheet – Youth
Friendly
General
Practice –
Resource #4

Youth Friendly
General
Practice –
Student
Handout

- 3) Medicare Information – follow up research activity: divide students into pairs to complete the following short research activity around Medicare. Begin by telling young people the following:

Getting a Medicare card

Young people they can get a Medicare card from the age of 15. The following website www.medicareaustralia.gov.au directs young people to the combined federal government human services address, where there is a youth issues section. See <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/young-people-becoming-independent>

Task: Go to the Medicare website and find out what a Medicare card is, what it allows a person to access and how a young person can get their own form. Present the information in a One Page flyer designed to share this information with other young people.

- 4) **Accessing health information in our area:** This activity requires young people to think about the access in their area. After spending time thinking about the questions below, students should choose 1-2 little known facts about doctors in their area.

Students can then use these facts to prepare a poster or glogster (using www.glogster.edu) to promote this information to other young people in their area. What is GP access like in your area? Is it hard to get an appointment with a GP?

- What makes a GP “youth friendly”?
- How would you go about finding a “youth friendly” GP? Which GPs are “youth friendly” in your area?
- Is it difficult for a young person to go to a GP where you live?
- What might stop a young person going to see a GP? How could these barriers be overcome?
- Why is health care usually confidential?

Student activity sheet – Youth Friendly GPs in our area – Resource #5

- 5) **Socio cultural perspective:** Does everyone have equal access to GPs? What factors would impact on access? How do these create additional barriers for young people?

Ask students to consider how young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may be less likely to access GPs than others. What are diverse backgrounds? How would they affect young people who need to access a GP? (Make a list as a class, then place all groups below on the board).

Divide the class into groups and allocate each group one diverse background from the following list:

- People living in rural and remote areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- People with disabilities

Medicare website

Website:
Glogster.edu

Student activity sheet – Youth Friendly General Practice – Resource #5

- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People from disadvantaged financial backgrounds
- Boys (discuss why this group is included by referring to research that states girls are twice as likely to access a GP).

In their groups students are required to discuss:

- How does this group's background affect their access?
- What specific barriers might they face?
- How can we address these barriers?
- What is one strategy that students could develop? – the group needs to design and outline a strategy for addressing GP use for these young people.

Group activity sheet - Designing a youth friendly health promotion campaign – Resource #6

Socio-Cultural Perspective: Access to health services (Teacher Notes)

1) Rural and remote areas

Discuss with students the differences in access for people living in rural and remote areas within Australia. Australia's overall ratio of doctors is 3 per 1000 people, yet in rural and remote areas this is closer to 1.7 doctors per 1000 people. If you are in a rural school consider how this affects people within your community – can they go to the local hospital for treatment and live at home? Can their family stay with them? If you are in a metropolitan area consider how the variety of services affects access – are young people more likely to visit a GP? Do other issues affect their access?

Would a young person in a rural and remote area be more afraid of people finding out about their health concerns? Why? Why not?
(You could look for advertisements about nearby medical services).

2) Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations

Ask students to think about those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds and whether these young people have equal access to health services? What might be needed to ensure they can access health services? Students and teachers may wish to explore the health challenges facing those from other cultural backgrounds at: <http://www.abc.net.au/health/consumerguides/stories/2003/04/03/1837445.htm>.

Q: How can culture create a barrier to health access?

Q: Are there services to support people from diverse language backgrounds to access health care?

3) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: many students may be aware of the significant gap between the life expectancy of Aboriginal Australians and Non Aboriginal Australians. Discuss major factors, which may have contributed to this gap and ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to be disadvantaged in terms of access to health care. Students should be aware of specific services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the reasons for their existence: <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/health/>

Group Activity Sheet - Designing a youth friendly health promotion campaign – Resource #6

Key Video Content - Teacher Notes Stage 5

What GPs do for young people

Young people can see a GP if they want for any health concern, including both mental and physical health. Many young people visit GPs for skin conditions or respiratory problems but few seek assistance for other concerns such as study pressure, stress or mental illness.

Young people can choose to visit a GP with their parents and caregivers or can go alone.

Making an appointment

Young people can make an appointment for themselves by phoning a surgery or practice and making an appointment. They do not need to say anything further to the receptionist about what the appointment is for. They may not be able to see a doctor on the day they phone – there is often a waiting time, particularly in areas where there is a GP shortage. There are some clinics where you can walk in and see whichever doctor is on duty at the clinic that day.

One way of finding a GP is to ask friends for recommendations.

Visiting a GP

At a first appointment there may be some paperwork to fill out at the surgery. Some places may ask you for your details, such as name, address and phone number, when you call. At other places you can simply come in for your first appointment and they ask you to fill in a short form about yourself.

Paying for a visit

It is a good idea to find out how to pay for the appointment when the young person makes the appointment. Some doctors bulk bill, which means the doctor charges Medicare directly for the consultation and there is no upfront cost to the patient. Other doctors bill privately, which means the patient pays for the consultation and then claims back some of the cost from Medicare.

The receptionist can call Medicare to get the family or individual Medicare card number. If the young person would like the receptionist to do this, it is a good idea for the young person to ask for this when they make their appointment.

When a doctor prescribes a treatment, there may be a cost involved eg for medication. If the young person has difficulty paying, they should talk to their doctor about this.

Getting a Medicare card

Young people they can get their own Medicare card from the age of 15. The following website www.medicareaustralia.gov.au directs young people to the combined federal government human services address, where there is a youth issues section:

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/young-people-becoming-independent>

This address includes the link to the “transfer form”, which is the form the young person needs to transfer from their parent’s card to their own card.

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/forms/3170> (it's 6 pages).

To get their own Medicare card, the young person completes the transfer form which they can either get online or at a Medicare office. They then need to lodge the form in person at a Medicare office with some photo ID.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that whatever the patient says to the doctor stays with the doctor. This means for young people that the doctor does not tell parents, school or friends about the visit. There are some exceptions where the doctor may be required to breach confidentiality. This is where someone was being severely harmed or was planning to hurt themselves or someone else, or where a doctor is obliged by law to release information, for example if directed by a court. Confidentiality also applies to test results – doctors do not give them to other people unless the patient has given permission for them to do so.

Note – confidentiality is linked to ability to consent to treatment. Young people are able to consent to medical treatment, as well as to confidentiality, as long as the doctor is satisfied that they are mature enough to understand the proposed treatment and its consequences. There is no fixed age for this but it is usually about 14 years of age. Often the doctor will encourage young people to involve their parent, especially if they are under 16. See also Teacher Notes Stage 4.

Resources

For further information about relevant laws applying to young people – see:

Australian Legal Information Institute www.austlii.edu.au

National Children's and Youth Law Centre www.lawstuff.org.au

Fact sheets from the Shopfront Youth Legal Centre www.theshoptfront.org

Background information

Excerpt from “The promise of primary health reform for youth health” article by A Dadich C Jarrett L Sanci M Kang and D Bennett (2013), Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, 49(11), 887-90.

The Australian primary care sector represents the first-port-of-call for most young people, aged 12 to 24 years, seeking healthcare (1,2). Relative to other clinicians, Australian young people are likely to consult general practitioners (GPs) for support (3, 4). Seventy to ninety percent of young people access primary care at least once a year, primarily for respiratory or dermatological concerns (5). GPs are therefore well-placed to promote youth health. As part of the primary care sector, GPs are responsible for promoting and reinforcing prevention, early intervention, and connected care (6). The adolescent developmental phase provides an opportune period for prevention and early intervention (5).

As recently indicated in the Lancet (7), attending to youth health represents a sound investment. This is recognised by a number of governments that endeavour to facilitate youth access to general practice. The Australian federal government entitles young people to hold their own Medicare card from the age of 15 years and thus access primary care services independently (9).

Despite government support for primary care and young people’s seeming acceptance of GPs, youth access to primary care remains limited. Recent research on GP activity throughout Australia suggests that patients aged 15 to 24 years account for approximately 8.6 percent of all encounters (10) – yet young people, aged 12 to 24 years, represent approximately 17.2 percent of the Australian population (11).

Even when young people access primary care services, research suggests some receive suboptimal care. A national study of general practice in Australia revealed that GPs do not embrace opportunities to target problematic lifestyle choices with patients, including alcohol and tobacco use (12). This reflects international research findings (13). These examples might partly explain why young people have been described as a ‘forgotten group caught between bureaucratic barriers and professional spheres of influence’ (14).

Limited youth access to timely and appropriate healthcare can have personal, social, and economic implications. At the personal level, many Australian young people experience chronic health and/or mental health issues (15). At a social level, chronic health and/or mental health issues can exacerbate the oft-cited burden of care among family members (16, 17), limit educational opportunities (18), and diminish employment prospects (19). At an economic level, poor wellbeing is likely to require more healthcare. With close to four million young people in Australia, aged 12 to 24 years (11), ‘adolescent health [represents] an opportunity not to be missed’ (20).

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Acknowledgements for teacher notes

These teacher notes were prepared for NSW Kids and Families by Justine Thomson, Health and Physical Education Teacher.

Acknowledgements for video resource

NSW Kids and Families acknowledge the following people and organisations for their contribution to the development of the Youth Friendly General Practice video resource:

Leslie Marsh (lesliemarsh.net)

Marlene Palmeiro

Brodie Simpson

Dr Carol Kefford, Staff of Academic GP Unit, Northern Clinical School, University of Sydney

Philip Batey, Head of Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE), PDHPE staff and 2013 year 10 students from Kincumber High School

Janelle Dennis, Head Teacher and 2013 year 11 and 12 students from Pennant Hills High School

Dr Melissa Kang, Senior Lecturer, Department of General Practice, University of Sydney - Westmead

Dr Lena Sanci, Associate Professor and Deputy Head, Department of General Practice, The University of Melbourne

'The Practice' in Blacktown

Dr Chris Ganora

And the many young people and other friends who willingly gave their feedback during the development of the video.

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