

Pediatric Nurse Practitioners' Perspectives on Health Care Transition From Pediatric to Adult Care

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study examined the perspectives of pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) regarding the needs of adolescents, parents/caregivers, clinicians, and institutions in the health care transition (HCT) process for adolescents/young adults.

Methods: PNPs ($N = 170$) participated in a luncheon for those interested in transition at an annual conference. Small groups discussed and recorded their perspectives related to health care transition from adolescent to adult services. Content analysis was used to analyze responses (Krippendorff, 2013).

Results: Four themes, *Education*, *Health care system*, *Support*, and *Communication*, emerged from the data analysis. PNPs identified health care informatics and adolescents' use of technology as additional critical aspects to be considered in health care transition.

Discussion: Opportunities and challenges identified by the PNPs are discussed to improve the quality and process of transitioning adolescents to adult services. This report will help National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners formulate a new Health Care Transition Policy Statement for the organization. *J Pediatr Health Care.* (2017) ■■, ■■-■■■.

KEY WORDS

Adolescent/young adult (AYA), health care transition, nurse practitioner, school based health centers (SBHCs), youth with special health care needs (YSHCN)

INTRODUCTION

Transitioning from pediatric to adult care is an important developmental step for all youth as they become independent young adults. Medical transitions are challenging for patients and clinicians, including nurses, social workers, and physicians. A successful transition process includes preparation of the adolescent for managing his/her own health and health care needs, transferring to adult-centered care with current medical information, and engagement in adult-centered care (American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Physicians, & Transitions Clinical Report Authoring Group, 2011). Transition from pediatric to adult health care has been recognized as a particularly vulnerable time for youth, requiring added attention by clinicians and health care systems (Maeng, Snyder, Davis, & Tomcavage, 2017; Nakhla, Bell, Wafa, & Dasgupta, 2017). Nurses have a key role to play in this transition to adult care. The purpose of this qualitative research was to better

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Conflicts of interest: None to report.

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understand the perspectives of pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) working with adolescent patients in primary and specialty care settings on the process of transitioning adolescents from pediatric to adult-centered care. The perspectives of PNPs, who play a critical role in the transitioning process, is not evident in the literature. A better understanding of transition-related needs of patients, parents, and clinicians, as identified by PNPs working with transitioning patients and caregivers, is needed to more effectively inform best practices and policies on the transition of youth from pediatric to adult care.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

According to the 2011/2012 National Survey of Children's Health, a nationally representative survey of parents whose children are between the ages of 12 and 18 years, 25% of 12- to 17-year-olds had a special health need (Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, n.d). The National Academy of Medicine & National Research Council of the National Academies (2014) report on the health of young adults described young adults as "surprisingly unhealthy" and called for more attention to the transition from pediatric to adult care (National Academy of Medicine & National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014, p. 4). Young adults face increased health and mental health risks with worse outcomes compared with adolescents and older adults, which is evident in the literature (Neinstein & Irwin, 2013; Neinstein, Lu, Perez, & Tysinger, 2013; Park, Scott, Adams, Brindis, & Irwin, 2014). According to the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health, the vast majority of U.S. youth are not receiving transition preparation. The 2016 estimates of transition preparation for youth with and, for the first time, without special health care needs, showed that 83% of youth with special health care needs (YSHCN) and 86% of youth without special needs do not receive transition services (Harris et al., 2017). The adverse impact of inadequate transition support for youth with chronic health conditions, particularly those with behavioral, emotional, and developmental conditions, includes increased medical and behavioral complications (McManus & White, 2017; Wafa & Nakhla, 2015), limitations in health and well-being (Maslow et al., 2013), lack of treatment and medication adherence (Annunziato et al., 2013), discontinuity of care (Szymanski, Cain, Hardacker, & Misseri, 2017), consumer dissatisfaction (Nakhla et al., 2017), higher emergency room and hospital use, and higher costs of care (Maeng et al., 2017). More recently, the evidence shows that a structured transition to adult care improves adherence to care, consumer satisfaction, and use of adult ambulatory care (Gabriel, McManus, Rogers, & White, 2017).

Research has identified the role of nurses and nurse practitioners (NPs) as an integral part of successful health care transition (HCT) programs (Betz, Smith, Van

Speybroeck, Hernandez, & Jacobs, 2015; Davidson, Doyle, & Silver, 2015; McManus et al., 2015). The nursing profession has recognized the potential for NPs to take a leadership role in the transition process for adolescents because of the strengths of NP practice that include communication, provision of holistic care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the development of policy and practice standards (Betz, 2013; Betz, O'Kane, Nehring, & Lobo, 2016; Betz et al., 2015; Joly, 2015, 2016; Lindeke, Krajicek, & Patterson, 2001). However, the literature is currently lacking the perspective of NPs related to the transition process from pediatric to adult care. This article discusses the perspectives of NPs specific to the needs of adolescents, parents/caregivers, clinicians, and institutions, as well as strategies used by NPs to support the transition of patients from pediatric to adult-centered care.

METHODS

NPs attending an annual national meeting were invited to participate in a luncheon entitled "Roundtable Discussion on Transition INTO and FROM Adolescent Health Services." Given the membership of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP), the participants included primarily PNPs and some family nurse practitioners (FNPs), although the breakdown of each was not recorded. The purpose of the luncheon was to gain insight from PNPs regarding the transition process for adolescents and young adults to inform a position paper for the organization.

The participants ($N = 170$) seated themselves at one of 20 tables. A brief presentation describing the goals and rules of the luncheon was provided to the group by the first author. Participants were asked to discuss each of the questions provided by NAPNAP (listed in the Box). Two PNPs and the organization's staff developed the questions. The questions were intended to capture information about the transition process from the perspectives of PNPs on youth entering into adolescent primary care services and those leaving pediatric health care services and going to adult health care services. This article focuses on the questions addressing the transition process from pediatric to adult health care services.

One member of each table volunteered to take notes on the guided discussion that occurred at each table. After the luncheon, the notes were collected and then transcribed word by word by the organization's office staff. All identifiers were removed from the transcripts. The data from the transcripts were determined to be exempt by the Yale University Institutional Review Board before analysis.

The researchers analyzed the data generated from the luncheon using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). Content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use"

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