
**Periodic Survey #59 – IDENTIFICATION, MANAGEMENT, AND REFERRAL FOR
PATIENT MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND MATERNAL DEPRESSION**

PS#59 assessed pediatricians' attitudes toward, frequency of, and barriers to identifying, managing and referring children and adolescents with mental health problems, as well as mothers with depression. The survey also addressed pediatricians' perception of availability of mental health services in the community, the extent of their mental health education and their interest in future education in this area. The survey was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation through a grant to the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc. of New York State (#203.0293, S. Horwitz, PhD, Principal Investigator). Findings from this survey will be used to develop educational programs, quality improvement activities and reimbursement/policy initiatives designed to improve the provision of mental health services in pediatric primary care.

Periodic Survey #59 was an eight-page self-administered questionnaire sent to 1,600 non-retired United States members of the AAP. An original mailing and six follow-up mailings to recontact nonrespondents were conducted from March through September 2004; 832 completed questionnaires were received for a response rate of 52%. Analysis was limited to 687 respondents who had completed their residency training and provided patient care (83% of all respondents). (This survey was also sent to an additional random sample of 200 pediatricians from New York state; these data will be reported elsewhere.)

Patient Mental Health Identification/Management/Referral

- Six out of 10 pediatricians report providing mental health services for children and adolescents in their practice; 66% say there are others in their practice who (also) provide medication, counseling or psychotherapy for mental health problems.
- Fourteen percent of pediatricians say child mental health services (outside of services provided in their own practice) are very available in their practice community, while 76% say services are somewhat available. Nearly all (92%) of pediatricians report referring a patient for mental health services within the 12 months prior to the survey.
- The most commonly identified mental health condition among patients is ADHD (26% of pediatricians say it is very prevalent and 64% say it is moderately prevalent in their practice); the next most commonly occurring condition is learning disabilities (17% say very and 64% say moderately prevalent) followed by behavior management problems (eg, conduct disorder, oppositional defiance disorder) (16% very, 57%moderately), depression (9%, 60%), anxiety (8%, 51%), substance abuse (5%, 33%) and eating disorders (6%, 27%).

Perception of Responsibility for Identification/Treatment/Referral for Child Mental Health Conditions

- Nearly all pediatricians (91%) agree it is their responsibility to identify ADHD and eating disorders among their patients; 88% think they should be responsible for identifying depression and substance abuse, 85% for behavior management problems and 83% for anxiety disorders, while 59% feel responsible for identifying learning disabilities.
- Most pediatricians (70%) agree it is their responsibility to treat or manage ADHD. Pediatricians are far less certain about their responsibility towards other common child mental health conditions: 32% agree it is their responsibility to treat/manage eating disorders, 28% so indicated for anxiety disorders, 25% for depression, 21% for both behavior management and substance abuse and 16% believe they should be responsible for treating learning disabilities. For each of these conditions, more than 30% of pediatricians are uncertain about their responsibility for treatment.
- More than 8 out of 10 pediatricians believe they should be responsible for referring patients for substance abuse (91%), learning disabilities (89%), depression (88%), behavior management (85%), eating disorders (85%) and anxiety disorders (80%); 55% of pediatricians agree it is their responsibility to refer for ADHD.

Current Practices Regarding Child Mental Health Conditions

- About 6 out of 10 pediatricians report they usually inquire about ADHD (64%), learning disability (63%), behavior management problems (59%) and depression (56%) in their practice. About 70% usually inquire about substance abuse, while about half usually inquire about eating disorders (50%) and anxiety disorders (48%). For each of these conditions, more than 30% of pediatricians say they sometimes inquire about them.
- More than half of pediatricians (57%) say they usually treat or manage ADHD in their practice and 25% say they sometimes do so. Few pediatricians say they usually treat or manage other child mental health problems, although a large proportion say they sometimes do so: 18% usually and 46% sometimes treat child or adolescent depression; 15% and 45% treat anxiety disorders; 14% and 47% treat behavior management problems; 11% and 42% treat eating disorders; 9% and 28% treat learning disabilities; 5% and 32% report treating substance abuse.
- Most pediatricians say they usually refer patients identified with mental health conditions other than ADHD to other providers, and many say they sometimes do so. Eighty percent of pediatricians say they usually refer patients for substance abuse and 16% sometimes do so; 79% and 15% refer for learning disabilities; 76% and 19% for eating disorders; 69% and 26% for depression; 65% and 30% for behavior management problems; 63% and 31% for anxiety disorders. Thirty-one percent of pediatricians report they usually refer and 59% say they sometimes refer patients identified with ADHD to other providers.

Reported Barriers to Addressing Child/Adolescent Mental Health Problems

- The most frequently named barriers to the treatment or referral of mental health problems for children and adolescents is lack of time to treat mental health problems (80%) and long waiting periods to see the referred mental health providers (79%). Most pediatricians named lack of training in mental health treatment (70%), lack of competence in ability to diagnose mental health problems (65%), and lack of confidence in ability to treat mental health problems with counseling (65%) or medication (64%) as barriers. Other barriers named by about half of pediatricians include: inadequate reimbursement for treatment (54%), unfamiliarity with CPT codes that reimburse for treatment (49%), concern about liability coverage (53%), lack of training in the identification of mental health problems (49%) and lack of confidence in ability to diagnose child mental health problems (46%).
- Most pediatricians say they are very interested in receiving further education in identifying (65%) and managing/treating (57%) depression and other mental health problems in children; another 28% and 32%, respectively, are somewhat interested.

K. O'Connor
8/16/05
g/ reports/PS59exsum pt maternal mental hlth x.doc