

## Adolescent Girl - Education and Empowerment



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Nature and nurture are two important factors in the flowering of an individual personality. Like the budding flower, the adolescent girl needs the nurture of a caring environment at home, supported by a friendly, empathetic and sensitive health system to help her to bloom and mature into healthy womanhood. It is a tragedy of our times that in developing countries including India some of these blossoms are nipped in the bud. It is to highlight and address the special needs of this vulnerable and silent group, that I decided to select adolescent health as the theme for my presidential year and declared 1999 as the year of the Adolescent Girl with a goal to promote Education and Empowerment.

As part of our program to increase awareness amongst the medical profession about the various issues related to adolescent health, we conceived the idea of dedicating this special issue of our distinguished journal to adolescent girl. Dewhurst 1989 commented a decade ago that adolescent gynaecology is not a new subject. However, awareness of this subject is new and becomes vitally important as adolescents account for a growing proportion of the world's population. To date, little

genuine attention has been paid to the health problems and concerns of teenagers, which is unfortunate as 10% of the population in developed nations and upto 30% in developing countries is in this age group (Sheil & Turner 1996).

It was with this determination and commitment that we launched the various activities planned this year for the Adolescent Girl with a CME program at the 42nd AICOG. Since then a number of workshops/clinical meetings focusing on the adolescent have been conducted at the society and state level with many more activities on the avail. Our focus has been multipronged. The Fogsi-Unicef task force for the adolescent girl has been planning and coordinating various activities with the assistance of Proctor & Gamble. These included advocacy and interaction with the government. Adolescent health was an important component of the 25 RCH workshops that FOGSI conducted in conjunction with the Ministry of Health in 7 states reaching a large number of our members and peripheral doctors in government service. As part of the school health services, we are conducting health awareness programmes in schools, having interacted with over ten thousand young girls.

In this issue, with the help of Dr. Reena Wani, I have attempted to highlight areas of interest not just in adolescent gynaecology, but also obstetric problems and other reproductive health issues related to the adolescent, who stand on the threshold between childhood and womanhood. Following an introduction to normal puberty and adolescence we have dealt with disorders of puberty onset, menstrual problems, genital infections including tuberculosis and even tumors.

Issues such as sexuality, contraceptive choices and counselling have been discussed in depth. Allied faculty members have also contributed articles such as those on mental health, crimes against adolescents and breast

disorders. The problem of unwanted pregnancy, the dilemmas of terminations versus continuation have also been dealt with. I am grateful to Dr. R. D. Pandit and his editorial board for their cooperation and to the various contributors for their well researched articles. Many more areas still remain uncharted. Many more things have yet to be done for our adolescent girl. It is with concern and commitment that FOGSI and its members have embarked on this journey to educate, empower and care for this silent group in our patient population. It promises to be a long, challenging and arduous journey but our purpose is noble and our final goal is optimum health for all womankind.

Before I conclude this editorial I must congratulate Dr. Reena Wani and acknowledge her hard work. She single handedly and meticulously went through each article and completed the task in time. I am grateful to her.

In the inspirational words of Sir Robert Frost:

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep  
But I have promises to keep  
And miles to go before I sleep  
Miles to go before I sleep."

Let each of us as Fogsí members, take upon ourselves the challenges of educating and empowering at least a handful of the adolescent girls we come in contact with in our personal and professional lives. Just as little drops of water collect to make a mighty ocean, one's individual efforts when multiplied by our large membership base together will forge a path forwards for the Adolescent Girl.

### References

1. Dewhurst J. Practical Pediatric and adolescent gynecology, 2nd edition, Edwards K (ed) London, Butterworths, 1989.
2. Sheil O, Turner M. Adolescent Gynecology. In: Studd J. (ed) Progress Obstet, Gynec. Vol 12: 215, Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1996.

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