

Adolescent Admissions to a Tertiary Paediatric Hospital: A Dynamic Pattern

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Abstract

Introduction: Adolescent inpatient facilities emerged in Australia in the 1980s to cater for an increasing number of young people with chronic illness and disability. Yet, there is minimal published data on the number of young people admitted to hospital within these units, their unit of admission, length of stay or reason for admission. A 12-year audit of adolescents admitted to a tertiary hospital with a dedicated adolescent unit and adolescent medicine programme in Victoria, Australia, was conducted to review the pattern of hospitalisation in young people in order to provide data to assist healthcare policy and planning agendas. **Materials and Methods:** Admissions to the Royal Children's Hospital in Victoria, Australia, of adolescents aged 10 years and above were reviewed over a 12-year period from 1990 to 2001. We identified the annual number of adolescents admitted, the proportion of adolescents admitted to the Adolescent Inpatient Unit (ward) and annual admissions under the Adolescent Medicine Unit (department). **Results:** Adolescents now constitute nearly 30% of all admissions at this children's hospital. Over this period, admissions to the Adolescent Inpatient Unit have nearly doubled and annual admissions under the Adolescent Medicine Unit rose from 38 to 288. The majority of adolescents were admitted under specialty medical and surgical units. **Conclusions:** The knowledge that nearly one in three admissions to this tertiary children's hospital is over 10 years old should help promote the development of planning and policy agendas that better balance both health and developmental priorities in this age group.

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