

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS  
COMMITTEE ON YOUTH

COUNSELING OPPORTUNITIES IN HUMAN REPRODUCTION\*

PROBLEMS relating to human reproduction are among the critical issues of our time, and it is appropriate that pediatricians contribute to the solution of these problems. The changing dimensions of comprehensive pediatric care, more specifically the significant numbers of pregnancies being reported in young persons, support this position. For example, national statistics show that 44% of all pregnancies occur in persons under 20, and one out of four mothers on Aid to Families with Dependent Children in New York is pregnant before 16.

At least four roles can be identified for the pediatrician:

1. Genetic counseling: the pediatrician has already become proficient in giving knowledge to parents of the incidence of in-born errors of metabolism, chromosomal abnormalities, and other problems associated with genetic inheritance patterns.

2. Sex education: he often provides sex education to individual patients, families, and parents, in addition to teaching groups in his own practice and in schools, churches, or youth organizations.

3. Family planning and pregnancy counseling: he may provide assistance in these areas in behalf of the parents or adolescents. This assistance may involve a wide range of clinical advice and treatment, including the concept of spacing (rhythm method), contraceptive devices, or oral medication, whatever is considered most suitable for the individual. All alternatives for dealing with an unwanted pregnancy should be seriously discussed with the teenage girl and the other persons involved, in-

\* This statement has been reviewed and endorsed by the Academy's Council on Child Health.

cluding the parents if feasible. The pediatrician is in a unique position by the nature of his close association and relationship with the adolescent patient to provide this important personal service.

4. Sex counselor: the pediatrician can offer marital counseling to young parents or adolescents requiring premarital advice. (A recent California law, AB 402, requires all marital candidates under 18 years of age and their mates to receive some form of premarital counseling before issuance of a marriage license.)

Obviously, there can be no one answer; the extent to which the pediatrician involves himself in problems relating to human reproduction is dependent on himself and his clinical interests. The potential areas listed here for pediatric involvement are merely guidelines and not recommended modes of behavior. Because of its importance as a crucial issue, the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends that each pediatrician examine his potential role in counseling opportunities in human reproduction. Furthermore, he should avail himself of current knowledge relative to this subject. Training in this type of counseling should be strengthened in pediatric residency programs. We owe parents and their children no less.

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VENEREAL DISEASE AND THE PEDIATRICIAN\*

THE increase in venereal disease in this country, particularly in the past de-

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Sprague W. Hazard, V. Robert Allen, Victor Eisner, Dale C. Garell, S. L. Hammar, Thomas E. Shaffer, Jerome T. Y. Shen, Natalia M. Tanner and John Allen Welty  
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