

Nurses: A Pivotal Link In The Provision Of Health Care To Disadvantaged Youth

by

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Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS)



Introduction:

YSAS is a state government funded, state-wide organisation that provides AOD treatment services for young people aged 12 to 21 years who are experiencing problematic substance use

Client services:



- Outreach teams based across metropolitan and regional Victoria
- Home-based and community residential withdrawal services
- 2 Day programs
- Reconnect family support program
- Residential rehabilitation program
- Residential Koori Youth Healing Service
- Supported accommodation program
- Primary Health GP Clinic

Primary care to underserved and marginalised groups



Young people engaged with YSAS are severely marginalised in that they are:

- substance users
- frequently homeless
- out of school or unemployed
- frequently have a history of incarceration
- often disconnected from family and community

Research has shown that many young substance users are unable to access traditional clinical and medical environments for multiple reasons, including:

- lack of current health services that are youth-friendly and able to cope with the often difficult behaviours exhibited by these young people
- actual and perceived stigma and discrimination
- client fear of legal consequences

(Brindis et al 1998; Holgate, Ponting & Rogers 1999; Gresenz 2000; Reid et al 2000; Hooke et al., 2001).

This typically results in:

- later medical interventions
- less effective health outcomes
- increased economic costs

These young people often ultimately present to A&E departments placing increased strain on already overburdened public health services

(Gresenz et al 2000)

YSAS Primary Health GP clinic:



- commenced in 2005
 - AGPAL accredited June 2008
 - provides primary health interventions to young people 12-25 yrs
- free health service
- combination of drop in and appointment based
- medication is paid for by YSAS

- it is well documented that this client group usually do not access health services, but are willing to engage with nurses in their own environments
- YSAS GPs work closely with nursing staff
- for client support Nurses take part in medical consultations

(Brown & Grimes, 1993)

Vignette 1: Jane



- 16 yr old female
- Anglo background
- currently living at home with alcohol dependent Grandmother
- not attending school
- not a YSAS client - originally attended drop in clinic with a female friend who accessed the Day Program
- both friends had slept with same male
- requesting screening for Chlamydia

- during consultation requested BBV screening despite low risk factors
- Jane had 3 sexual partners in her life
- presently having unprotected sex with current partner
- no history of IVDU
- follow up in 1 week
- did not attend follow up appointment

- positive for Chlamydia
- positive for HIV
- not responding to messages left on mobile phone
- home visit
- diagnosis given
- over course of three weeks client given education and linked into MSH Greenroom and Positive Women

Vignette 2: Tom



- 23 yr old male referred to YSAS services at age 21 from the Justice system
- ICO for 3 months then a 18 month CBO
- court order to link him into YSAS Health Service to monitor depression and anxiety
- long history of poly substance abuse
- 3 year history of depression
- Prozac commenced but non compliant after few weeks

- lack of motivation
- sleeping 14-16 hours a day
- poor food intake
- found it difficult to leave the house
- creative, perfectionist about art, photography, graphic arts, and music

- goal was to attempt to reset his body clock
- spend 15-20 minutes in the morning sun, and get out of bed by 10am
- encouraged to go to bed by 1-2 am
- open bedroom curtains slightly to let light into the house
- attempt to eat a small breakfast each morning

- commenced on fish oils and multivitamins
- consequently has reduced alcohol intake to ½ bottle of wine with the occasional party drug use
- started worm farm and vegetable patch
- excursions down train train lines to photograph grafitti
- volunteer work at CERES

Vignette 3: Pam



- 20 yr old aboriginal women from rural Victoria
- in YSAS rehabilitation program
- grew up in a small country town
- lives with single mother; a younger sister to another father, and has poor knowledge of father
- sexually abused as a young girl
- commenced alcohol and cannabis use at age 13
- commenced on Largactil & Avanza in detox for depression and hallucinations

- commenced on mental health care plan by YSAS GP to manage depression
- STI, BBV screening and immunisation catch up
- diagnosed with Hepatitis C
- referred to Royal Melbourne hospital
- fearful of travelling around Melbourne
- assisted to use public transport
- referred to CASA

Conclusion:



YSAS nurses' approach is:

- holistic
- client centred
- work within a multi disciplinary team
- meet a wide range of health and life challenges that face our client group

- instill a sense of hope
- provide a link to health services that previously clients had been mistreated and misunderstood in
- impart knowledge and empower clients
- walk with them for a period of time
- show clients how to take control of their health and life
- show how to navigate a complex health system