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## Health Surveillance: What Adolescents Expect

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### Abstract

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**Introduction:** Involve adolescents and knowing what to expect from a health surveillance query, rather than decide for them without the consult, is of paramount importance.

**Objective:** To know the opinion of adolescents about health surveillance query.

**Methods:** Cross-sectional study of qualitative nature and phenomenological approach. There were semi-structured interviews in a non-probabilistic convenience sample of 14 adolescents, aged 15 to 17 years old, attending high school.

**Results:** After the content analysis of the responses, it was found that teens put the emphasis on prevention, there were no differences between the two sample groups.

**Conclusion:** The query should be preventive and about health promotion; the theme that adolescents seem to consider most important is to address sexuality (affections, contraception and STI); professional mentioned was a nurse with specialized training; although they prefer the free time, they like to a fixed schedule to answer questions and education sessions for health; as to the operation site, said the school.

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**Keywords:** Adolescents, health surveillance.

### 1. Introduction

The Adolescent Health Surveillance Consultation assumes great importance and complexity, representing many times to health professionals a real challenge. In this period the individual undergoes profound hormonal, physical and psychological changes. It is true that health does not depend solely on



the provision of care, yet it is undeniable the impact of surveillance actions in this age group, since health and adolescent welfare are today seen as key elements of human development (Prazeres, 1998).

Currently, programs and projects in health of adolescents have acquired great importance. Throughout history, only in the late 60 WHO began to face this age group more attentively. In Portugal, it was in the late 70's began to be addressed health issues of adolescents. Since then, there has been a growing concern in the organization of services: The National Health Plan 2012/2016, (DGS 2012), describes the strategic guidelines and measures necessary for the care of young people from 10 to 24 years.

The vertiginous changes in society difficult by adults the understanding of what are the needs, problems and circumstances of life of contemporary youth. In the health field, should give particular attention to this phenomenon. There is therefore the need of adopting intervention strategies for adolescents, that meet the new social realities of this age group (Prazeres, 1998).

According to the same author, to increase the contact of adolescents with health services and improving health care services, they must have several characteristics: Accessibility; Visibility and recognition; Quality; Costs - for teens, gratuity, or the minimum costs in access to care is an important factor approach to health services; Dimension - the services must ensure the comprehensive and continuing care, should also enable effective responses to particular health needs and problems; Coordination; Flexibility and diversity; Privacy, confidentiality and informed consent; Youth participation - it is important to encourage the participation of adolescents in the evaluation and redesign of care. The health care for this age group should follow a multidisciplinary model, which is based on the establishment of a team, where it is up to each professional to ensure quality care. For this to happen it is necessary to favor the sharing of knowledge, as well as achieve a good functional relationship between doctors and nurses, psychologists, nutritionists, social workers and administrative sector, among others.

According to Coates, Beznos and Françoso (2003), the health care professional who provides care for this age group should have the following characteristics: Show real interest in the adolescent problems and perfect identification with their longings and frustrations; Have good scientific, moral, ethical and cultural education; Have good humanistic education; Be knowledgeable of the growth and development process and its variables; Having good knowledge of the main psychological problems that most concern in adolescence; Being able to convey warmth, enthusiasm and empathy; Avoid value judgments; Ensure absolute confidentiality and respect the modesty of young people; Have emotional balance and good physical health; Show accessibility features, tolerance, understanding and honesty.

The nurses in this context, its role is paramount, one of the health professionals who can be trained and able to give proper flow within the health services, establishing the first contact with the teenager and proceeding to the submission, as required detected. Therefore, the nurse plays an important role within the health services being responsible for creating a link between young people and the health unit. The participation of nurses is also essential in education approach to health, activity that can and should be developed not only in health care but also in schools, in the communities and in the most diverse contexts which may be the teenager.

Also Fonseca (2005a) mentions the need for well-trained and motivated, technically competent, and able to communicate with young people, without being patronizing or issuing judgments. Included in the most appropriate professional profile, the following characteristics are: have good capacity of interpersonal communication, being motivated, not to judge, have facility to establish a first contact, be someone whom the young person trusts, are ready to act in best interest of the young, be understanding and competent, being able to provide information and support that facilitates the choice of healthy lifestyles, prove commitment to struggle for health promotion, the prevention and care. For the same author, technical competence must be accompanied by respect and sensitivity to the person and their experiences, considering each teen as a unique and as such should be treated.

In Portugal, the National Health System (NHS), integrates adolescence consultation at the level of primary health care, the National Child and Youth Health Program, in correlation with the School and Reproductive Health Program. The attendance to adolescents should be based on a preventive approach, following periodic reviews of health parameters over the life cycle. The National Child and Youth Health Program (DGS, 2013), guides professionals to provide care to children and youth at the level of preventive care.

The recommended frequency of consultations between the ages of 10 to 18 years of age should be (DGS, 2013): from 11 to 13 years (global health examination); to 15 years and 18 years. However, these guidelines shall conform to particular cases, can be introduced or canceled some queries. The ages listed are not rigid: if the adolescent use the health center for other reasons, shortly before or shortly after the key age, may be made to the consultation indicated that age, also allowing the teen's accessibility to the consultations.

The DGS (2002b, p.5), said: "There is no doubt the impact of surveillance activities of child and adolescent health, relevant and quality. The maintenance and promotion of health of all children and young people is therefore a must for professionals and services. "

However, the importance of involving young people in improving the environment in which it is inserted, it is increasingly recognized. Young won and was awarded the right to rule on the issues that affect them.

They are also experts in their own environments and are best placed to identify not only the problems that affect them but also possible solutions.

Rather than decide about their life without the consult, it is important to get the knowledge of their needs, to draw further adjusted intervention programs, and develop good-practices towards health promotion.

## **2. Research questions**

Given the above, rise to concern for the starting point of the study: What adolescents expect from Health Surveillance consultation?

### **3. Purpose of the study**

With the present study aims to: Identify what teenagers, attending the 3rd cycle of basic education and secondary, in public schools located in rural and urban areas, aim of Adolescent Health Surveillance Consultation.

Accordingly, the following objectives were delineated:

- Characterize the sample studied by biographical data collection;
- To analyze the opinion of adolescents about the Adolescent Health Surveillance Consultation;
- Compare the views of teenagers about the Adolescent Health Surveillance consultations, attending a school in an urban and a rural area.

### **4. Research methods**

Descriptive, cross-sectional and qualitative study with a phenomenological approach, whose population was composed by adolescents attending secondary schools, one from the rural area and other from the urban area, located in the north of Portugal.

The sample, not probabilistic for convenience, consisted of 14 adolescents, aged 15 to 17 years old who were attending one of the years of schooling, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The selection criteria included the place of residence and ease of oral expression, the selection was delegated to the class teacher.

#### *4.1. Procedures*

The research instrument used was a semi-structured interview, carried out from a thematic guide, which sought to contemplate data on sociodemographic and adolescent health surveillance query. The questions used were kind of closed and open, respectively, to characterize the sample and get personal details of the subject under study.

For the authorization and interviewing the presidents of the executive boards of the respective schools were contacted. After confirmation of their authorization was requested to the presidents of executive boards ask permission, by the guardians of students, to the participation of their children in the study.

The interview was conducted in a room provided for this purpose, where maintaining the privacy of respondents.

The development of the interviews followed the three stages. In the first, it was made the presentation of the interviewer/interviewee and the presentation of the objectives of the study, in the second were made questions about the characterization of the sample and the third was developed interview on surveillance of health.

### **5. Findings**

In an attempt to tailor health services to the real needs of the population it is designed, made up some questions to know the opinion of adolescents.

These results were analyzed by coding operations, resulting in the registration units. Subsequently sent to quantify them, obtaining enumeration units. Finally, we proceeded to the classification and aggregation, which were determined the most relevant categories and sub-categories.

Each interview is identified with a letter: A to L, following the alphabetical order. Interviews A to F were applied to adolescents who attend the school of the rural area. The letters G to L, identify interviews applied to adolescents who attend the school of the urban area.

Register units are identified by their letters identifying the interview where it was harvested.

In order to facilitate the discussion of the following results, this analysis follows the order of the interview questions.

### 5.1. What it is for the adolescent the Adolescent Health Surveillance Consultation?

Following the analysis of the responses to this question emerged four categories: prevention, treatment, supportive relationship and specialized information and six subcategories (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Opinion of the adolescents about the Consultation

Categories	Sub Categories	Registration units	Total	
			Rural school	Urban school
Prevention	Inform	"It is to inform teens how do you should prepare for the future."(A), (A) - 2	7	5
		"It is where we explain what is adolescence, symptoms and sometimes we feel like doing." (G) - 1		
		"To explain where the diseases are, how we can get them and its effects..."(C), (D), (H), (I) - 4		
		"Young people want to have more information about the issues that concern teens..." (E), (F), (J) - 3		
		"Information on methods for concentration in studies." (L) - 1		
	Prevent diseases	"... may help to know about the dangers that can run with sexually transmitted diseases." (D) - 1	6	5
		"Longer serve to prevent diseases..." (A), (B), (D), (E), (F), (G), (I), (J), (K), (L) - 10		
	Clarify doubts	"The consultation should help us to do good things for our health ... and we know what we can do to be healthier." (D) - 1	10	8
		"It must be for questions and clarify about the diseases we can catch up." (C), (K) - 2		
		"That's where we can ask questions about adolescence and we can take our doubts ..." (A), (B), (C), (D) (D) (D), (E), (F) (G), (H), (I), (L) - 12		
To advise	"It is a space to clarify myths..." (K) - 1	2	1	
	"It is also where we can answer questions we have regarding issues that arise..." (D), (K), (L) - 3			
Learn	"...And advise some measures..." (B) - 1	4	0	
	"...ask for advice, we can not tell our parents and our friends..."(E), (K) - 2			
Guide	"It serves to learn important things about adolescence." (B), (C), (C) - 3	6	0	
	"It serves to educate more young people..." (B) - 1			
		"It is to be prepared for the future, how to have a life together, how it will be, learn to be a father." (A) - 1		
		"...mainly oriented to the future, to have a good society,		

Treatment		responsible, not selfish, to think of others, to be solidary" (A), (A), (A), (F) - 4 "It may help guide us to our life." (D) - 1 "It's for when young people have health problems and can not solve alone" (A) - 1	2	2
		"...and how we must also treat diseases if necessary, because when we have a problem or a disease, I think it was also important to gear us how to solve it" (C), (H), (L) - 3		
Supportive relationship	Help	The person who makes the query ... Help us ... "(F) - 1 "...assist in the journey of life, help with family problems." (K) - 1	1	1
	Talk	"...And talk about tobacco and alcohol, which should not be used." (C) - 1 "It's a consultation to discuss problems that exist, as solve them, about the changes in adolescence, how the teen feels to others and to himself, in society." (F), (H), (I) - 3 "A place where we can address different topics, which disturb us during adolescence." (G) - 1	2	3
Specialized information	Unburden	"... And also vent about various topics ..." (A), (A) - 2 "It is a consultation where you can vent all our problems ..." (E), (G), (G) - 3	3	2
		"It is important, if we have some doubts, we have experts to talk with "(B), (B), (F) - 3 "It is important because young people explain them things that are not the truth, and consultation understand otherwise, and it is good that they know such things correctly" (D), (E), (E), (J) - 4 "I think it's important to have a person to talk to, because the professional will not tell what we had talk." (B) - 1	7	1

5.2. What are the issues that adolescents would like to see addressed in the Consultation?

Following the analysis of the responses to this question, seven categories emerged: sexuality; feeding; interpersonal relations; leisure activities; dependencies; safety / prevention of accidents and professional guidance. Of these categories, subcategories were created (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Themes to be addressed in the Adolescent Health Surveillance Consultation.

Categories	Sub categories	Registration units	Total	
			Rural school	Urban school
Sexuality	Sexually transmitted diseases	"...Sexually transmitted diseases, not only AIDS but other diseases also exist ... They must show the reality of things for us to learn through it..." (A), (A), (B), (B), (F) - 5 "They should inform young people that is possible to have certain diseases if they don't take precautions such as condoms..." (D), (F) - 2 "It is very important and necessary to speak of them. Show what can happen to everyone...and so you need to prevent and report on the risks they face...how the diseases are transmitted." (B), (C), (C), (D), (E), (H), (I), (K), (L) - 9	12	4
	Contraceptive measures	"It is important to inform young people about what they have to do to avoid pregnancy...have to take the pill...and then have to prescribe and teach how to take it and answer questions..." (A), (A), (A), (A), (D), (E), (H), (H) - 8	15	11

		"Family planning, are my main concerns." (B) - 1 "...what contraceptive methods we can take...and which ones work best." (B), (B), (B), (D) (D), (E), (F), (G) (H) (I) (I), (K) -12 "I would like to know more things about the morning-after pill, how it works and it really hurt..." (E), (L) - 2 "It is important to speak of myths regarding contraception. We often talk among friends but it is necessary to have accurate information." (K), (L) - 2 "... indicate the places where they can get free methods." (L) - 1		
	Physical and psychological transformations	"The body changes are also important. We have to know what is happening with the body...there are hygiene methods that we have to have" (A), (C), (D), (F), (H) - 5 "speak psychologically gives way in more emotional moments...to be able to let off steam." (B), (J) - 2 "I think it's important to talk about what appears...because some people are uncomfortable with questions and confused by it." (B), (E), (I), (K), (L) - 5 "...there are people who feel rejected and tell what happens to them and ask for help could solve the problems with the body and raise their self-esteem." (E) - 1 "My mother has spoken to me but it is important to speak with an expert because my mother knows some things but do not know everything "(G) - 1	8	6
	Teenage pregnancy	"I find it important to speak how can we prevent pregnancy...even when something happens like an oversight, what we should do." (B), (E), (F), (K), (L) - 5 "... talk about what to do when a girl is pregnant..." (D), (I), (L) - 3 "... and also what to do if it happens, not to withdraw them the children." (H) - 1	4	5
	Affection / Dating	"Learning to live as a couple, to relate, may be a good stage for that." (A) - 1 "It was good to explain that dating is not only kisses, but what it is to date" (D), (I) – 2 "It's important. There are people who do not feel very well in relationships and they could ask for advice " (E) - 1 "...when a relationship ends we are psychologically affected...if there is support at the psychological level is important. It should be explained that it is a normal thing but there should also be limits on the relationship." (F), (H) - 2 "If a person feel the need to open up to someone specialized...to talk about your affections and your love life, this possibility should be opened " (J), (K), (L) - 3	4	5
	Pornography	"It is important because young people begin to see these kinds of movies and then confuse this with dating. They should explain the difference " (D) - 1 "... explain that it is not good to see." (A), (B) - 2	3	0
Feeding	Healthy Eating Habits	"...If they know how to eat they will not need to lose weight." (B) - 1 "We have to know what makes us eat well for not having diseases. There are people who do not have proper nutrition." (B), (C), (G) - 3 "They should speak about nutrition, because young people begin to think about body...they do not know how to make healthy eating" (D), (I), (K) - 3	7	4

Interpersonal relations	Anorexia / Bulimia	"They should explain how to have a healthy diet and eat every day in canteen." (A), (E) - 2	7	2
		"They could give sample menus for a healthy and varied diet, give suggestions." (F), (J) - 2		
	Obesity	"They should advise young people not to do this and say what are the diseases that can lead." (A), (B), (D) - 3	5	3
		"Report what to eat and how we can help." (C) - 1 "...show us the signs...and help to give them psychological support. These people often do not believe in friends...it is more credible hearing that they have a problem from a professional " (E), (F), (F), (G), (H) - 5		
	Group of friends	"I think it's important to speak about obesity, because there are fatter younger and more diseases..." (A), (B), (E), (L) - 3	7	7
		"... there are also those young people suffering, even psychologically, because they are too fat. They do not know how to diet and doctors can help them "(C), (D), (H), (K) - 4		
	Communication with parents	"And give our opinion ... it is important to help us to say no to these things." (A), (C), (D), (E), (F), (H), (I), (J) - 8	4	4
		"It is important to talk about how to deal with friends, because many young people are influenced by friends" (B), (D), (H), (K), (L) - 5		
	Depression / Suicide	"It is important to talk to young people who should be friends, because many are apart and then not have who to talk or vent." (G) - 1	6	5
		"It is important to speak of the relationship at home with parents, the home environment..." (A), (A), (K) - 3 "They could also give us a tips "to talk with our parents on more complicated matters" (E), (F), (H), (I), (J) - 5		
Female / Male role in society	"They could explain how it happens and why people do it. I think that if people could talk they will feel better "(A), (D), (G), (L) - 4	5	2	
	"should help young people when they are depressed...when happen some more serious things with their boyfriends or death of family members...If they were accompanied when they are more sad or fragile, maybe not happen either." (B), (E), (F), (I), (J) (K) - 6 "Also by studying a lot, could happen breakdowns. They should alert young people to rest and know how far they can go "(E) - 1			
Occupancy leisure	"It is very important because teenage pregnancies happen and then they do not care about anything. Even a little older...married and then don't want to know" (A) - 1	7	2	
	"They should teach give more importance to women...if they spoke it in the consultation could be to change their mentality, because now the society lives differently and many of my colleagues do not think so." (B) - 1 Guide to what is expected of young people as adults ". "(C) (I) - 2 "mainly teach the boys that decisions are taken together. They should tell the boys that they should also treat the children...Parents should also have a role." (E), (F) - 2 "... may be an opportunity for some teens denounce domestic violence or sexual abuse" (L) - 1			
Audiovisual media (Internet, television, console,	"The leisure time is a matter of our choice ... on the Internet sometimes people see things they should not see. Television is the same...must drive a person to the best." (A), (D) - 2			

	reading and music)	"The leisure activities have to be targeted because they can not spending so much time on television, console and Internet..." (B), (E), (F), (F), (H), (J) - 6 "I should say that the Internet should only be used if needed." (C) - 1		
	Physical exercise	"It is important to explain what good does sport because there are people who do not practice sport." (C), (L) - 2 "They should tell us which were the best sports to do." (A), (D), (F), (J) - 4	4	2
	Associations / Volunteering	"Volunteering think it was interesting, but do not know how to do. Maybe they would help me to know where there is." (A), (E), (I), (K) - 4 "They should inform, give suggestions...say more things for us to do." (B), (E), (F), (F), (H) - 5	6	3
Dependencies	Drugs	"...Who are on drug often steal to get money...they should explain what drugs do." (A), (K) - 2 "should choose to prevent consuming and explain that they are dependent, in order to avoid that they are addicted and explain their consequences." (B), (B), (C), (D), (E) (I) - 6 "The subjects I have more doubts is the addiction, especially those who want to open rooms for people do drugs." (B) - 1 "Report which drugs are, the symptoms, which cause, what are the consequences." (F), (G), (L) - 3	8	4
	Tobacco	"It is very important because teens start smoking too early ... must say that is bad and show how: those who die cancer." (A), (B), (C), (K) - 4	3	1
	Alcohol	"Inform about alcohol...show pictures with things caused by alcohol." (B), (C), (K) - 3	2	1
	Coffee	"I think it's very important ... because some people do not know that caffeine is also a drug and addictive." (B) - 1	1	0
	Self-medication	"Explain whether we should go to the doctor when we are sick or do self-medication." (B) - 1	1	0
Safety / accident prevention		"Show young people what can happen if they are to speed or do not use helmet...and must wear seatbelts and protective equipment." (A), (B), (C), (D), (E) (F), (G), (H), (I), (J), (K) - 11 "Young people should avoid driving drunk." (K) - 1 "... it is essential to alert us to the rules of security." (F) - 1	7	6
Professional orientation		"... Guidance on how to study and what exists in society to respond to the things we like to do. The sites or areas where we can work to feel accomplished." (E), (F), (H), (I) - 4	2	2

### 5.3. How adolescents would like it to work the consultation?

With regard to this question, two categories emerged in the light of the responses: Professionals involved; Consultation operation.

The professional category involved seven sub-categories were created: Doctor; Nurse; Psychologist; Nutritionist; Sexologist; Always with the same professional; Different professional (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Consultation Operating Mode.

Categories	Sub	Registration units	Total
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	Categories		Rural school	Urban school
Professionals involved	Doctor	"Doctors, depending on the problem we had." (D), (G) - 2 "Doctors who like to speak to teenagers." (L) - 1	1	2
	Nurse	"... The nurses also have more experience to talk to us." (A), (B), (H), (L) - 4 "Nurse, depending on the problem." (C), (D), (E), (F), (G), (I) - 6	6	4
	Psychologist	"I would prefer the psychologist...because you can let off steam and to prevent and advise..." (A), (B) - 2 "...but more Psychologists make more guidance." (E), (F) - 2 "Psychologist ... depending on the problem we had." (G), (I) - 2	4	2
	Nutritionist	"In the case of nutrition should be a nutritionist..." (J), (K) - 2	0	2
	Sexologist	"...maybe a sexuality specialist person." (K) - 1	0	1
	Always with the same professional	"Always the same person, because we already know and can confide in her." (C), (E), (F), (K) - 4 "...because they knew of my problems and did not have to tell other person" (H), (J), (L) - 3	2	4
	Different professional	"With different people...be the person who relates better and, if the first time do not like, ask for another." (A), (D), (G) - 3 "should vary because people have different methods to explain." (B), (I), (K) - 3	3	3
	Consultation operation	Free time	"I want a free time for emergencies ..." (A), (K) - 2 "When you feel confused or doubts and wanted to talk to someone, feel at ease to go there...when you feel the need." (D), (E), (F), (G), (H), (I), (J) - 7	4
Fixed schedule		"...And a fixed schedule for information." (A), (L) - 2 "With time and the appointed day and when needed waited for the appointed day for consultations" (B), (C) - 2	3	1
Accompanied		"I think we should have the right to choose a person to accompany us." (B), (G), (K) - 3 "I would like to bring a friend." (D), (F), (H), (I), (L) - 5	3	5
Alone		"I'd rather go alone." (A), (C), (E) - 3 "Disagree lead parents or friends, because that can subconsciously create some shyness" (J) - 1	3	1

#### 5.4. What is the place where adolescents would like it to work the Consultation?

Following the analysis of the responses to this question, two categories emerged: School; Health Centre (see Table 4).

		Rural school	Urban school
School	"... In school because it is easier and closer." (B), (E), (F), (G), (H), (I) - 6 "In school, because it is closer and because the health center the known people saw us to go there and were talking "(D) - 1	4	3
Health center	"...Because there is more quiet...nobody knows..." (A) - 1 "In the Health Center because it is more reserved." (C), (L) - 2 "The Health Center was much more comprehensive." (J) - 1 "...because there are more conditions." (K) - 1 Table 4. Working place of the Adolescent Health Surveillance Consultation.	2	3
	Categories      Registration units	Total	

## 6. Conclusions

Consultation should be preventive and about health promotion; the theme that adolescents seem to consider most important to address in the health surveillance consultation is sexuality (affections, contraception and STIs); the professional most mentioned was a nurse with specialized training; although they prefer the free time, they would like a fixed time to answer questions and education sessions for health; as to the operation site, said the school.

Adolescents from rural areas showed a greater concern in obtaining specialized information. There is a full time psychologist in the school of urban area and easier access to information.

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