

FC02-02 - WHY DO LATE ADOLESCENTS NOT SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?

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Objectives: To describe reasons for not seeking professional help at the age of 17-18 years, when a need for mental help is present.

Methods: In a person identifiable survey among 3278 Finnish adolescents 15-16 years old at baseline, reasons for not seeking professional help were studied among respondents of a two-year follow-up, who had reported a need for help for a mental health problem but had not sought professional help (n=128). The respondents were instructed to choose from the following list all alternatives describing their situation: thought that the symptoms will eventually alleviate anyway, unsure about who to turn to, felt too exhausted to get help, anxious of somebody finding out, negative experiences of dealing with health professionals, distrusted the effectiveness of professional help, turned to parents for help, parents estimated that there was no need for professional help, turned to friends for help, friends estimated that there was no need for professional help.

Results: The three most common reasons for not searching for professional help were, the notion that the symptoms would alleviate without help (71%), exhaustion (43%) and turning to friends for help (26%). Uncertainty about to whom to turn and exhaustion were more common among those with depression compared to those with no depression (33% vs 14% , p=0.025 and 55% vs 35% , p= 0.042).

Conclusion: Mental health literacy of late adolescents must be enhanced in order to make them take mental health problems seriously enough to get professional help.