

26 February 2024
Geneva, Switzerland

To whom it may concern

It is with great pleasure that I have learned about the initiative by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens to institute a professorship in Adolescent Medicine. This is important because adolescents are not simply older children or younger adults. Adolescence is one of the most rapid and formative phases of human development, and the distinctive physical, cognitive, social, emotional and sexual development that takes place during adolescence demands special attention in national training programmes, policies and plans.

In this respect, having a professorship in Adolescent Medicine will contribute to developing a leadership cadre for adolescent health and development, and is an important step towards building an adolescent-competent workforce.

To ensure quality services for adolescents through building an adolescent-competent workforce, WHO recommends creating and implementing competency-based training programmes in pre-service and continuing professional education.

The following competencies are considered essential:

Understanding of adolescent physical, neurological, cognitive, and psychosocial development, and of its impact on health and implications for health care and health promotion

Effectively interact with an adolescent client by providing context-, age- and developmentally appropriate information and counselling; delivering appropriate guidance through brief interventions (e.g. motivational interviewing) as required; performing a psychosocial assessment (e.g. using the HEADSSS framework); and by supporting parents/guardians in their educational tasks

Applying in clinical practice the laws and policies that affect adolescent health-care provision such as policies on consent and assent, privacy and confidentiality, by managing common ethical dilemmas and assessing adolescents' capacity to take autonomous decisions about their health and health care

Delivering services for adolescents in line with quality standards by organizing service delivery in line with locally applicable standards or, if those are absent, in line with WHO global standards; by working effectively with schools and other community-based programmes and developing a structured approach for follow-up and referral; and by communicating with

parents, guardians, family members and other community members and organizations about the value of providing respectful, confidential health services to adolescents

Delivering evidence-based clinical care for specific conditions including but not limited to assessing mental health and manage mental health problems; providing sexual and reproductive health care including counselling on sexuality, sexual identity, sexual debut and safe sex, contraception, explain prevention of female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices; assessing and managing substance use and substance use disorders, managing nutrition related disorders; and managing chronic health conditions including disability

Globally, very few countries have a specialty of adolescent medicine. By instituting the professorship in Adolescent Medicine to promote the above-mentioned competencies in pre-service and continuing professional education, Greece will become an example of good practice for the entire region.

I wish you all the success in this initiative,

Sincerely,



Valentina Baltag, MD, MSc, PhD

Unit Head, Adolescent and Young Adult Health

Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child & Adolescent Health & Ageing

World Health Organization

20 Avenue Appia

1211 Geneva 27

Switzerland

E-mail: baltagv@who.int