Physical and Mental Health Concerns in Adolescents and Adults with Down Syndrome

National Association for Down Syndrome 2018 CONFERENCE  “Creating Lifelong Learners”

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Brian Chicoine, MD

Medical Director of the Advocate Medical Group Adult Down Syndrome Center
Adult Down Syndrome Center
Life Expectancy

• Life expectancy:
  – 1907: 9 years
  – 1984: 28 years
  – Today: 60 years

• One of the oldest well-documented individuals with Down syndrome, 83 years old at death
The Interaction Between Physical and Mental Health

• Any and all behavior change should be viewed as a possible communication tool
• Promoting one promotes the other
Pain

- Pain tolerance/reduced responsiveness
- Pain perception
  - Delayed
  - Localization

More Common Health Conditions

• Hearing impairment
• Vision impairment, keratoconus, cataracts
• Dysphagia (swallowing)
• Sleep apnea
• Infections
  – Skin
  – Lung/Respiratory
More Common Health Conditions Continued

• Gastrointestinal
  – Gastroesophageal reflux
  – Celiac
  – Constipation
  – Hernias

• Urinary
  – Retention
  – Undescended testicle

• Orthopedics
  – Atlanto-axial instability
  – Osteoarthritis
More common, continued

- Cancer
  - Leukemia
  - Testicular cancer
- Autoimmune
Mental Health and Neurologic

- Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Autism
- Regression
Conditions that are Less Common

- Hypertension
- Atherosclerotic disease
- Cancer, solid tumors
40-year-old man

• Presents to Emergency Department with chest pain
• Low incidence of atherosclerotic disease
• High incidence of gastroesophageal reflux
• Eating too fast
30-year-old woman

- Losing skills
- Wide differential of causes
  - Sleep apnea
  - Hypothyroidism
  - Depression
- Alzheimer’s disease RARE before age 40 years
15-year-old girl

- Recurrent diarrhea
- Differential
  - Infection
  - Celiac
  - Lactose intolerance
  - Inflammatory bowel (Crohn’s or Ulcerative Colitis)
  - Medication side effects
  - Overeating
18-year-old man

- Not doing as well at school
- Unhappy
- Regression

- Putting head on desk

- 50-year-old woman
38-year-old woman

- Agitation
- Don’t forget pain
- Wide variety of causes
Resources

Web site – https://www.advocatehealth.com/health-services/adult-down-syndrome-center/ (or search for “Adult Down Syndrome Center)

Facebook – https://www.facebook.com/adultdownsyndromecenter

Contact
Laura Chicoine, Project Manager, Research and Education
Laura.Chicoine@advocatehealth.com
847-318-2368
Resources

• Author
  – Mental Wellness in Adults with Down Syndrome: A Guide to Emotional and Behavioral Strengths and Challenges
    Dennis McGuire, PhD & Brian Chicoine, MD
  – The Guide to Good Health for Teens & Adults with Down Syndrome
    Brian Chicoine, MD & Dennis McGuire, PhD
Questions?
Discussion