



Vicious Cycle: Exploring the Complex Network of Factors Behind Teen Pregnancy

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Objectives

- To provide an overview of crisis teen pregnancy and its consequences
- To outline the key risk factors of teen pregnancy
- To discuss an evidence-based approach to screening and counseling pregnant adolescents
- To review the key proactive factors in preventing teenage pregnancy

Overview: Teen Pregnancy in Hong Kong

- There are over 5,400 crisis pregnancies/year in Hong Kong
- Young mothers often live in a cycle of trauma, abuse, and poverty
- The Covid-19 pandemic has added to teens' isolation and stress
- Without support, many pregnant adolescents will continue to face stigma along with social inequities



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A Case Story: Ginny

Ginny, age 14, has missed her period for several months. She is seen for a clinic visit where her urine pregnancy test is positive. She has no significant past medical history. Ginny shares that she met her partner who is 22 years old through a dating App. She denies being coerced to have sex. An ultrasound confirms she is at 30 weeks gestation. Ginny is withdrawn when told that she is pregnant and initially refuses to allow her mother to be contacted but finally agrees to have her join the next meeting.

Ginny's mother and father were 20 and 21 years old when she was born. Her parents divorced when she was 3 and her mother remarried when she was 5. Her mother has a history of alcohol abuse and she has a strained relationship with her and her stepfather. Ginny was referred to her school's educational psychologist at age 8 for anger and "difficult behavior". Her parents placed her in a foster home from age 9-13 years.

Key Risk Factors: Family

- Family history of teenage pregnancies
- Limited communication between parents and teen
- Negative family interactions
- Poor parental supervision
- Significant unresolved conflict between family members
- Single-parent families



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Key Risk Factors: Individual

• Being the victim of sexual abuse

• Drug and alcohol use

• Having sex at a young age

• Lack of goals for the future and poor school performance

• Low self-esteem

• Lack of knowledge about sex or contraception

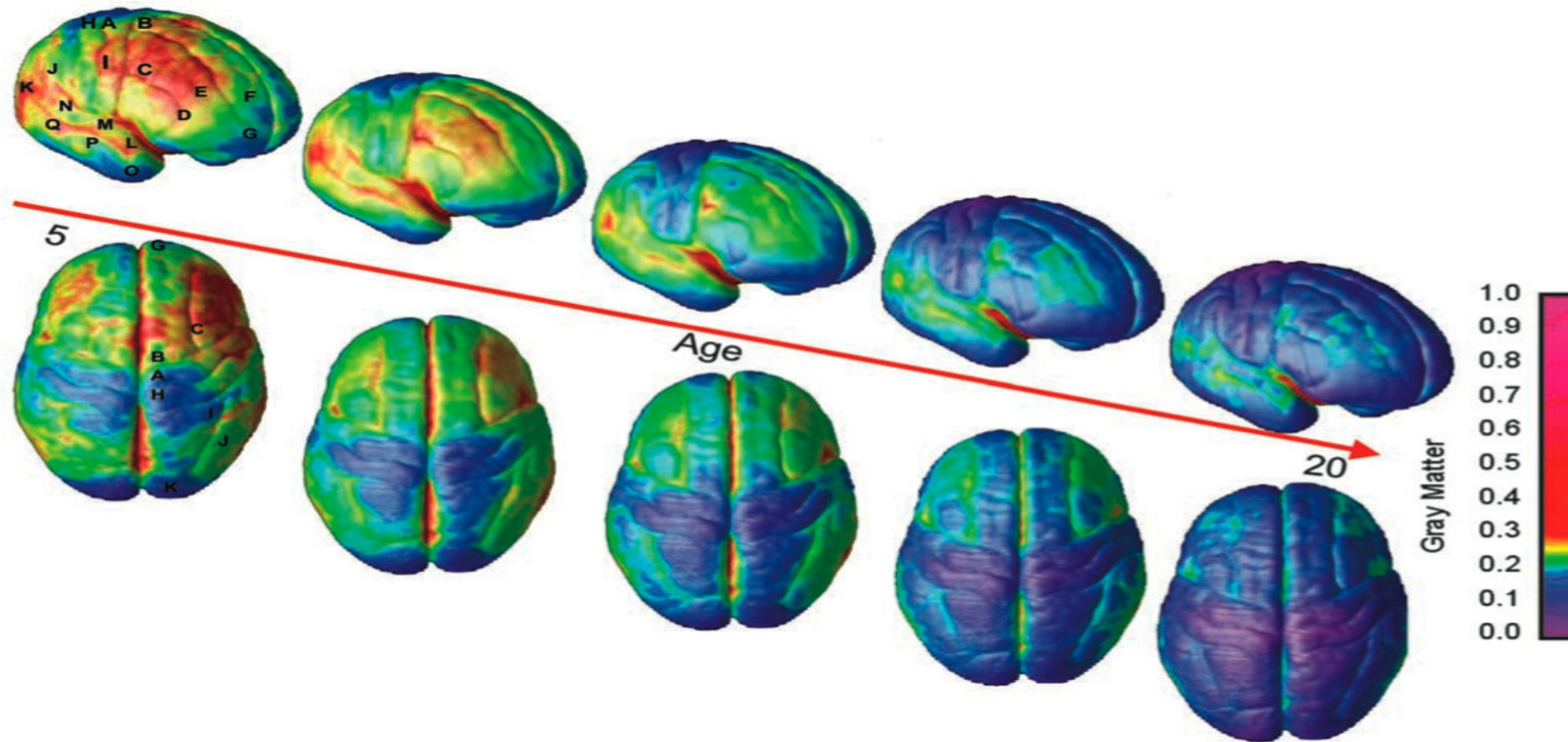
• Negative attitude towards using contraception



Risk Factors: Social

- Dating at an early age
- Dating older people
- Friends who are sexually active
- Poor peer relationships
- Pressure from peers to have sex

Teen Brain Development



<http://prbblog.org/index.php/2010/12/01/adolescent-brain-development-reproductive-health/>

Back to our Case Story

Ginny's mother suggested for Ginny to put the baby up for adoption, taking into consideration of the practical needs like **financial concerns**. Ginny kept every prenatal visit after being referred to the hospital, and her mother accompanied her. A month after the first intake, caseworker was notified that Ginny had given birth to a baby girl at week 32 of gestation pregnancy. Her pregnancy was uncomplicated except her **child was underweight**.

Overview: Teen Moms

- Less likely to:
 - Receive adequate prenatal care
 - Graduate from high school
- More likely to:
 - Die or have complications in childbirth
 - Be poor as adults
 - Have symptoms of depression
 - Lack resources to foster their children's development



Overview: Infants born to Teen Mothers

- More than 2x's times likely to have
 - Low birth weight
 - Premature
 - To die in the first month of life
- * Girls <15 years old have infants at greater risk for poor health



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Strength Based Approach to Adolescents

S: Strengths

S: School

H: Home

A: Activities

D: Drugs

E: Emotions/ Depression

S: Sexuality

S: Safety



Additional Tips for Working with Pregnant Teens*

- Make the teen the primary historian
- **Establish confidentiality**
- Determine developmental stage
- Use understandable language
- Be aware of non-verbal cues
- Use open-ended questions
- Be non-judgmental
- Listen to the teen



Back to our case

The baby ended up receiving care in Mother's Choice Child Care Home under the recommendation of Family Child Protection Services Unit's (FCPSU) social worker as to the welfare and safety of the child.

American Academy of Pediatrics Statement: Caring for Teenage Parents and Their Children

Provide

Medical home for teen parents and their children

Address

Development of both infant and adolescent parent

Encourage

Continuation of healthful behaviors from pregnancy

Assess

Risk for domestic violence; adolescent parents are at greater risk

Include

Both parents/caregivers in patient education

Utilize

Community resources such as WIC

Emphasize

Importance of completing high school

Praise

Achievements and healthful behaviors

Supporting Pregnant Teens: What Research Shows

A 20 year study of teen mothers showed improved outcomes when:

- Participating in program for pregnant teens
- Remaining in school
- No subsequent pregnancies 26 months postpartum
- Not isolated
- Have sense of control
- Have only 1 or 2 subsequent children

Compared to those in one-on-one care, young women in group prenatal care

- Decreased preterm birth
- Increased prenatal knowledge
- Felt “more ready” for labor and delivery
- Greater satisfaction with care
- No differences in birth weight

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Preventing Teen Pregnancy*

- Increase access to reproductive health care and health information
- Increase access to higher education and employment
- Avoid use of shame and stigma to discourage sexual activity and teen parenthood



Preventing Teen Pregnancy: Tips for Parents and Caregivers*

- Have ongoing/open conversations about sexual health
- It's never too early to start
- Talk with your teen about your values and your expectations
- Don't depend solely on school sex education programs for STI/contraception
- Make it clear that a teen can come to you with any questions/concerns

Preventing Teen Pregnancy: Tips for Parents and Caregivers*

- Know that technology has changed romance
- Build on unique strengths and self-esteem
- Cultivate “bounce”
- Remember it takes a village!

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Resources

www.childrenshospital.org/centers-and-services/childrens-hospital-primary-care-center-chpcc-program/other-services/young-parents-program Children's Hospital of Boston Young Parents Program (YPP)

childrensnational.org/primary-care/wellness-resources/healthy-generations-program Children's National Hospital Center Healthy Generations Program

www.girl-mom.com Community Advocacy and Support by and for Young Mothers

www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm Resource Guide of Best Practices for Pregnant and Parenting Teen Programs: Teen Father Services

www.advocatesforyouth.org Advocates for Youth

www.aap.org American Academy of Pediatricians

www.arhp.org Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

www.cahl.org Center for Adolescent Health and the Law

www.guttmacher.org Guttmacher Institute

www.naspag.org North American Society of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology

www.prh.org Physicians for Reproductive Health

www.siecus.org Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States

www.adolescenthealth.org Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine

www.plannedparenthood.org Planned Parenthood Federation of America