A Descriptive Study of Team-Based Well-Child Care in the Netherlands

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Background

Well-child care in the United States consists of frequent medically-focused assessments done in a traditional office practice by physicians and less commonly by pediatric nurse practitioners. Studies have shown the structure of well-child care in the United States to be out-dated and less effective than other nations.

The Netherlands is ranked number one in overall child well-being by UNICEF (2007). The Dutch provide a team-based approach to well-child care developed to meet the medical and psychosocial dimensions of the patient.

I traveled to Rotterdam, Netherlands in May 2008 for 9 weeks to study the Dutch well-child care system and develop an understanding of their team-based approach. With the data I collected, I compared and contrasted the United States and the Netherlands. The Dutch have much to teach us about community-based well-child care and the ways that the United States can adopt.

Methods

- Literature review
- Observation in well-child clinics, youth clinics, and maternity nurse visits alongside nurses and physicians
- Interviews with nurses and physicians working in well-child care
- Analysis of field notes

Dutch Well-Child Care Structure

Public Postpartum Care for First 8 Days
- Daily check-up from a nurse
- Daily house work assistance
- Scheduled check-up with midwife

Well-Child Clinic
- 0-4 years old
- Half of visits are with the nurse
- Half of visits are with the physician
- Use of Growth Book for each

Youth Health Clinic
- 5-19 years old
- Half of visits are with the nurse
- Half of visits are with the physician
- Use of Youth Monitor Questionnaire for each visit
- Nurses visit local schools for some visits

Each clinic accommodates a few neighborhoods, most people are able to bike there!

Dutch Roles in Well-Child Care and Visit Schedule

Nurse
- Psychosocial aspects
- Behavior
- Thought processes
- Social environment
- Parenting issues

Doctor
- Medical aspects
- Physical health
- Assessment of vital organs
- Discussion of medical history and recent illness
- Allergies and diet
- Sleeping habits

Doctor’s Assistant
- Greets parent and child on arrival
- Measures child’s height and weight
- Observes parent-child interaction in waiting area

The doctor and nurse work at the same level. There is no sense of hierarchy. Each depend on each other for the information they receive from the parents and children.

Dutch Clinic Team Meetings

In both clinics, the nurse, doctor, and assistant meet daily to discuss the children seen that day. As a team, they decide on areas of concern and treatment plans.

Future of Dutch Well-Child Care

- Combine well-child and youth services into a central building.
- Redefine the role of the nurse and doctor, having the nurse see all of the children’s visits. The doctor will be available for medical concerns if found by the nurse.

Lessons for the United States

- Organize care immediately after birth
- Develop a team-based model
- Stronger involvement of parent and youth in visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Who do I visit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-8 days</td>
<td>Nurse, Midwife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
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<td>3 months</td>
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<td>4 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 days</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11 years</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13 years</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-16 years</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
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