LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Children seen by Leicester Genitourinary Medicine Physicians 1988-1990

In the recent *Genitourinary Medicine* article entitled "Introduction to Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Children,"1 Drs. Estreich and Forster mentioned the paucity of data on the incidence and prevalence of sexually transmitted infections in children and young adolescents. The use of the Leicester Genitourinary Medicine clinic by those under 16 years of age may be of interest in this context, although not necessarily reflecting the general U.K. population.

Over 3 years, from 1988 to 1990 inclusive, 55 boys and 128 girls under 16 years of age were seen in Leicester genitourinary medicine's clinics. There were a total of 10 410 new male attendances and 8 993 new female attendances over the same period at the Leicester clinic. The age distribution is shown in table 1.

The sources of referral of these children are represented in the piechart (fig). It was noticeable that most of those referred by a partner, and indeed all who were referred by Family Planning Clinics, police surgeons and social workers, were female.

Of the 183 children, 15 boys and 51 girls were diagnosed as having the following:—chlamydia or urethritis-related problems (38), warts (22), gonorrhoea (9), pediculosis pubis (9), herpes simplex (7), syphilis (1). Of these, seven girls and six boys were less than 12 years old.

The possibility of rape or sexual abuse was alleged in a sub-set of 29 children (15.5% of the total) whose ages and sexes are shown in table 2. Of these children, three girls and no boys showed signs of sexually transmitted infection; one, aged 6 years, had genital warts; one 14 year old girl said she had been forced into prostitution and had chlamydia, trichomonas and primary herpes, the other girl aged 14 had gonorrhoea and trichomonas.

The girls over 12 years of age included five who were currently pregnant, and eight who had previously been so. A review of contraceptive use by those of 12 years, or older, gave the results shown in table 3. Eight of the girls over 12 years (7-7%) admitted to prostitution.

The above review revealed that in a 3 year period, a total of 183 children attended the clinic, 36% of whom were found to have at least one S.T.D. The lack of consistent use of contraception in boys and girls under 16 who were sexually active was reflected in our figure for S.T.D. and pregnancy. We were surprised at the low number of children seen with alleged sexual assault, in relation to the size of population served.

It would appear that there is a need among adolescents for more information on sexual health, and about agencies such as Family Planning and genitourinary medicine clinics.

S M YOUNG
F E A KHANE
Department of Genito-urinary Medicine,
Leicester Royal Infirmary,
Leicester LE1 5WW, UK


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**Table 1** Under 16 year olds, by age, seen in the Leicester Genitourinary Medicine Clinic 1988-90 inclusive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>&lt; 2 Years</th>
<th>2 to 12 Years</th>
<th>12 to 16 Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2** Age distribution of possibly abused or assaulted children seen from 1988-1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>&lt; 5 Years</th>
<th>5 to 12 Years</th>
<th>12 to 15 Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3** Contraceptive methods employed by 12 to < 16 year olds—1988-90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of contraceptive</th>
<th>Oral contraceptive (self or partner)</th>
<th>Condom (self or partner)</th>
<th>Assault only or patient denies ever having intercourse</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S M Young and F E Keane

doi: 10.1136/sti.68.6.423

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