Confidentiality Is Critical for Teen Gyn. Care

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BOSTON — A few adjustments might be needed to make your practice approachable and comfortable for adolescent patients, but the long-term payoffs can be worth it.

"Why is it some people aren't so comfortable taking care of adolescents? They think they take more time in the office. They have varied issues. It's sometimes challenging, and a lot of ob.gyn. residency programs didn't address pediatric or adolescent gynecology specifically, Marc Laufer, M.D., said at an ob.gyn. meeting sponsored by Harvard Medical School.

"We're aware of that, and we're trying to address it through the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology [NASPAG]," said Dr. Laufer of Harvard and chief of gynecology at Children's Hospital Boston.

Confidentiality is "one of the key issues" in making a practice more friendly for adolescents. One critical move is to make sure sound doesn't carry. If office walls aren't soundproof, Dr. Laufer suggested using sound machines, such as white noise machines or sound conditioners, which can help mask sounds between offices.

A lot of care for these patients can be conducted by their primary care providers. But when it comes to certain diseases, "if we treat and diagnose them when people are younger, we may improve their long-term health care," Dr. Laufer said at the meeting cosponsored by Brigham and Women's Hospital. Dr. Laufer said if polycystic ovary syndrome were diagnosed and treated during adolescence, there would be a greater chance of decreasing rates of obesity and diabetes. The same holds for endometriosis. An early diagnosis likely would result in less pelvic pain over the patient's lifetime and lead to improved long-term fertility.

Since most adolescents are "Internet savvy," Dr. Laufer encouraged physicians to direct young patients to online resources such as the Web site by the Center for Young Women's Health at Children's Hospital Boston (www.youngwomenshealth.org). The site offers education information in English and Spanish and an online chat room where teens can ask questions and get answers from health professionals.

The NASPAG's Web site (www.naspag.org) also offers information for teens and physicians and includes links to other adolescent care Web sites. ■

FDA Warns About Imported Test Kits

The Food and Drug Administration is warning consumers about possible false results from several unapproved home-use diagnostic test kits marketed in the United States via the Internet by Globus Media of Montreal.

The test kits are not approved for sale in the United States. There is concern that the use of these products could lead to false results that could contribute to significant adverse health consequences, but there are no confirmed instances of false results, according to the FDA.

The kits are labeled as Rapid HIV Test Kit, Rapid Syphilis Test Kit, One Step Cassette Style Cocaine Test, One Step Cassette Style Marijuana (THC) Test, One Step Cassette Style Amphetamine Test, Rapid Dengue Fever Test, and One Step Midstream Style HCG Urine (Home) Pregnancy Test.

Use of these tests could lead to false results that could contribute to adverse health consequences.

The tests, sold through Web sites such as www.htkit.com, have been distributed nationwide. The name of the kit appears on the instructions, but the envelope, instructions, and packaging may not accurately identify the manufacturer, packer, or distributor. Anyone who has used one of these products should be retested using valid test methods.

No home-use test kits intended for diagnosing HIV, syphilis, and dengue fever have been approved for sale in the United States.

—Kerri Wachter