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Child & Adolescent Psychiatry



Nature of the Work

Working as a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist is a fantastic opportunity to make a difference to the young people of the next generation. It is a fun and challenging specialty which has seen tremendous developments over the last two decades and is continuing to make great strides forward.

Working with young people means that early intervention at this critical period is possible with the potential for making a lifelong difference to those being seen.

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry combines the rigours and science of medicine, with the art and creativity of therapy. The ability to advocate for young people and improve public mental health, both add dimensions to the work that mean the possibilities are bountiful.

Working in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is a specialty within psychiatry working with people up to the age of 18, and their families. Working in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is both varied and rewarding. There are many approaches to treatment, ranging from cognitive behavioural therapy to family therapy. Medication and admission to an inpatient unit may occasionally be used, but this is less frequent than for adult mental health services.

The first decade of this century saw a real focus on child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) both in terms of policy and resources. The shift, backed up by increasing evidence of the importance and effectiveness of CAMHS, has been really welcomed.

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists believe in the importance of family and community and this is reflected in service provision. The work emphasises a multidisciplinary and multi-agency approach. This means collaborating with colleagues with skills in different areas, or with partners from other organisations such as schools, social services, hospitals, or the police. Consultation with other agencies is an important part of the work, to ensure integration of interventions at all levels.

Common procedures/interventions

Most interventions involve talking to children and young people and their families to gain an understanding of difficulties and to find a way forward, within a child development perspective.

Being part of a wider community of professionals involves liaising with multi agency networks to improve care for young people.

A good understanding of legal frameworks is also important, since Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists may need to intervene by suggesting a particular care arrangement, educational provision or ensuring the safety of young people through legal means.

Associated subspecialties

There are no formal General Medical Council recognised subspecialties within Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. However there are a number of growing special interest areas including the following: -

- Inpatient
- Infant mental health

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