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Editorial

A tribute to the pediatrician Hatim A Omar, MD

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Introduction

Hatim A Omar, MD, FAAP completed his obstetrics/gynecology residency in Bulgaria, physiology fellowship at the New York Medical College in Valhalla, New York, residency in pediatrics and fellowship in adolescent medicine at West Virginia University.

Since 1998 he has been appointed the director of Adolescent Medicine and director of the Young Parent Program at the Kentucky Children's Hospital in Lexington with responsibility for the Outpatient Adolescent Clinics, Young Parent program Clinics, inpatient and outpatient consultations and resident and student teaching and curriculum development providing service to half of the state of Kentucky for adolescent medicine. At the University of Kentucky School of Medicine in Lexington, he has established a state-of-the-art adolescent program and he has lead efforts to better protect, evaluate and treat children and adolescents, victims of sexual abuse and continues to do that beyond his regular working hours. He built a model clinic with a multidisciplinary team available till late in the evening and accessible to teens on a same day basis if needed.

Adolescent medicine

Hatim believes that there will never be enough adolescent medicine physicians, so he wanted to make sure that everyone in the health care field is comfortable with teens. He started a shadowing

program for 1st and 2nd year medical students as well as: Nursing, psychology, public health and social work students. He started a mandatory seven day rotation for all 3rd year students and a one month elective for 4th year students. In addition, all primary care residents also do at least one month in adolescent medicine. This has led to more than 50 young people making a career in caring for teens and increased the number of primary care providers in rural Kentucky, who are comfortable caring for teens.

He has led a community wide effort to reduce teen suicide by founding the grass root "Stop youth suicide campaign", which over the years (since 2000) helped more than 20,000 teens, created new laws in the state for prevention and according to the YRBS 2013, for the 1st time in the history of Kentucky the state is now below the national average in attempts and completed suicides.

He has reduced repeat teen pregnancy in his program to under 1% and his program HPV vaccination rate is close to 100%. Hatim has provided hundreds of community education presentations on adolescent health and organized an annual conference on adolescent health that helped thousands of people relate to adolescent health and prevention.

Publications and awards

He has also published hundreds of articles, over 15 books and many media appearances on all aspects of teen life. He has helped tens of students, residents, fellows and young faculty publish and succeed in academics.

Hatim is the recipient of the Commonwealth of Kentucky Governor's Award for community service and volunteerism, Kentucky Teen Pregnancy Coalition Award, Awards for suicide prevention from the Ohio Valley Society for Adolescent Medicine and Kentucky Pediatric Society, Sexual Abuse Awareness Month Award for his work with sexual abuse victims from the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Professionals, Special Achievement Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Founders of Adolescent Medicine Award from the AAP, Puzzle solver award for helping teens with disability, Miracle maker award (twice) and award in teaching and research.

International work

Together with Hatim we are part of an international professional group working in the area of child, adolescent health and human development with a global focus and engagement. As a result of this collaboration Hatim has helped and continues to help in many countries for the wellbeing of adolescents, such as for example suicide prevention in New Zealand as a Fulbright scholar.

Conclusions

Hatim has accomplished more than anyone we know to change Kentucky from one of the worst states to a much better place for teens. He contributed more towards increasing awareness and interests in adolescent health and saving lives. He is available all the time to teens for consultations and e-mail consultation anywhere in the world where he is travelling. He has gone the extra mile needed to make teens the center of focus and a trusted person to ask and consult with. We wish him now at 60 years of age to work together with him for 60 years more in collaboration and global friendship.