



Fletcher Group Partner Success Story

BRIDGING THE GAP

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KNOW YOUR PATIENT

Substance use early in life can have enormous consequences, impairing healthy development and contributing to risky behavior. But how to know if your child is using? Pediatrician Margaret Ng seems to have cracked the code by applying a new evidence-based screening and intervention process developed by the Fletcher Group. Since its introduction in May at Coal Grove Pediatrics in Ironton, Ohio, Dr. Ng has identified a number of young people who might otherwise have gone undetected and untreated.



QUESTIONS...

The questionnaire developed by the Fletcher Group is designed to reveal objective risk indicators that can alert physicians to potential problems and help initiate matter-of-fact discussions that otherwise might be difficult for families to have at home. "The beauty of it is there's no pointing fingers or screaming," says Dr. Ng. "They simply fill out a form while waiting for their appointment. It helps break the ice without putting anyone on the spot."

...AND ANSWERS

"Sometimes you get answers from kids you didn't expect," says Dr. Ng, "but that's the the great thing about it. You're able to ask everything and everyone. And if they're honest, it can really make a difference."

Dr. Ng says there's often a genuine sense of relief on the part of both the parents and the children. "The typical reaction of parents is: Okay, my kid's at risk. I need to be more careful and keep an eye on this."

EARLY IS BETTER

Early detection is critical in all medical practice, but particularly when it comes to preventing addiction among children.

"Maybe the younger ones aren't actually using any drugs or alcohol," says Dr. Ng. "But they're already forming opinions."

"By engaging them early, we can affect the thinking that might go into a crucial decision later in life."

"It may seem like a small thing at the time, but it can ultimately have a huge impact."





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NOW WE'RE TALKING

Nine in ten American teenagers know someone who smokes, drinks or uses drugs during the school day. And half will use an illegal drug before graduating from high school. But how to discuss those dangers with children who may be shy and secretive one moment, distrustful and rebellious the next? In one recent study, 65 percent of adolescents said they prefer discussing substance use with their doctors and the only reason they don't is they're not asked. Fletcher Group Technical Assistance is helping to make sure that discussion takes place smoothly and is effective.



BILLINGS HELP, TOO

Screening and interventions cost money, but the Fletcher Group has helped in that regard, too, by showing Dr. Ng how to make insurance claims using appropriate billing codes. The reimbursements can potentially fund additional services for at-risk youth.

A MODEL FOR OTHERS

The success recorded by Dr. Ng with low- and middle-income families in eastern Kentucky, southern Ohio, and southern West Virginia can now serve as a model for other physicians in the many rural communities served by the Fletcher Group Rural Center of Excellence.

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WORK WITH DR. NG

"Dr. Ng's eagerness to learn and improve her practice is inspiring," says Fletcher Group Director of Employment Services Lori Baier.

"The proactive, pains-taking steps taken by people like her give us hope that our families and communities can become stronger than ever and the lives of our children can be bright and full of promise."

