Collaborative opportunities for adolescents and young adults in the public health care decision-making process

Dear Editor:

Preventing Chronic Disease (PCD) is a peer-reviewed journal published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States. *PCD* was established to provide a forum for researchers and practitioners in the fields of chronic disease prevention and health promotion. In addition, annually the *PCD* provides an opportunity for high school, undergraduate, graduate, medical and post-doctoral students to submit papers relevant to the prevention, screening, surveillance, and/or population-based intervention of chronic diseases, including but not limited to arthritis, asthma, cancer, depression, diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease.¹ Through this program, adolescents and young adults have the ability to participate in the health care policy- and decision-making process. I believe that this program will potentially empower adolescents and young adults and help them prepare to become healthy adults.

Unfortunately, there are no similar programs available in Canada to encourage adolescent and young adult participation within the health care system. Hence, creating a similar opportunity for adolescents and young adults in Canada is an important public health initiative. This opportunity would no doubt foster Canadian adolescent and young adult inclusive participation in health care decision making, and provide the support – ownership and partnership – that young people require to develop into socially responsible healthy adults.

However, according to the current guidelines of the American competition, high school students in the US must compete with

university students from all levels (including post-doctoral students).¹ Thus, I would like to suggest, if possible, opening a student research paper competition exclusively for high school students. This makes sense as their knowledge, maturity levels and perspectives are far different from university and post-doctoral level students. Moreover, I believe that high school students have to deal with a unique set of public health problems, including among others: sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy eating, sleep deprivation, depression, suicide, tobacco, addiction, pregnancy, alcohol-impaired driving and sexual identity crisis. To truly address these issues, there must be a well-recognized and respected platform like the *Canadian Journal of Public Health (CJPH)*, where high school students can freely share their unique perspective on the above issues and more. Therefore, I humbly request that the *CJPH* take a leadership role in this regard and create a similar forum for Canadian adolescents and young adults.

Thank you for your consideration.

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doi: 10.17269/CJPH.106.5167

REFERENCE

1. Information about the 2015 US *PCD* Student Research Paper Contest can be obtained at: <http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/images/studentpaper2015.pdf> (Accessed October 1, 2015).