Today’s piece was prepared by Ben Simms, MD, MPH, based upon an NPR story [Health Effects of Transitioning in Teen Years Remain Unknown](http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/07/22/424996915/health-effects-of-transitioning-in-teen-years-remain-unknown)

This piece addresses different perspectives on the nascent field of gender reassignment in transgender youth. The piece discusses research from nearly a decade ago finding that a quarter of transgender youth had attempted suicide, and notes drug abuse and depression as common. The journalist introduces conflicting expert opinions, raising questions as to the ethics in withhold hormone therapy in light of these issues counterbalanced by concerns that there is still little data available about long-term medication effects.

This article discusses findings from a recent study that enrolled transgender participants 12 to 24 years old who had not yet begun hormone therapy. More than half had considered, and 1/3 had attempted, suicide at least once in their lifetime, and over 30% met criteria for clinical depression. Participants recognized gender incongruence at 8 years, but did not disclose to their families until 17 years. The article continues that [The Endocrine Society guidelines](http://press.endocrine.org/doi/full/10.1210/jc.2009-0345) recommend initiating hormone therapy at 16 years old, where some physicians argue that treatment should be initiated much earlier and opponents claim that only a small percent of children continue to feel gender incongruence as they grow older, and that therefore, treatment should be started later.

One other finding highlighted by the journalists was that prior to initiating treatment, all study participants had similar levels of estrogen or testosterone when compared to non-transgender individuals, which refutes the notion that giving someone hormone therapy could change the gender identity of a person.

This article appears balanced in presenting the controversy without being leading and opens the reader to the larger debate about how to provide the best care for transgender youth.

**RESOURCES ON TRANSGENDER YOUTH FOR PARENTS, YOUTH & EDUCATORS:**

[The Center for Transyouth Health and Development](http://www.chla.org/site/c.ipINKTOAJsG/b.7501767/k.5FBA/Transgender_Services__Adolescent_Medicine__Case_Management__Health_Education.htm#.VbVaqqYXix0) *Children’s Hospital Los Angeles: Information, resources, and support services; led by lead investigator of the study highlighted in the article above, Johanna Olson, MD.*

[Trans Youth Equality Foundation](http://www.transyouthequality.org) *Education, advocacy, and support for transgender youth and their families*

[“Transgender People”](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/kids-health/parents/school-and-family-life/tough-topics/transgender-people/) *Seattle Children’s Hospital. Information for families about transgender and adolescent health*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!