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ABC series demonstrates critical importance of supporting transgender adolescents

Blair Schuch & Klaus Martin Beckmann

First Day, a four-episode ABC television series written and directed by Julie Kalceff, stars Evie MacDonald as a 12-year-old transgender girl named Hannah as she starts high school as her true self. We recommend the series as it portrays transgender adolescents in a positive light and could give others hope. Indeed, in recent years, there has been an increase in media recognition of the unique needs and experiences of transgender children and adolescents. With increased awareness has come greater acceptance; however, the irreversible effects of cross-sex hormone treatments, particularly, raises controversy on whether adolescents should be allowed to receive gender-affirming treatment.^{1–3} This controversy is a focus of the media and, combined with the omnipresent stigma surrounding transgender adolescents, has a harmful impact on the mental health of the young transgender population and their families.

Psychosocial aspects of gender transition rather than its pharmacological management are emphasised. Hannah faces extra challenges including handling a bully from her old school, navigating rules around gendered bathrooms, parental concerns about sleepovers and fitting in when swimming. Hannah is able to overcome each challenge with the help of her family, her new friends and a supportive school administration. First Day demonstrates that when a transgender young person is provided with acceptance and support, they become able to direct their time and energy in to roles and goals unrelated to transition and often have better mental health outcomes as a result.⁴ First Day normalises many aspects of Hannah's new high school experience, making it relatable to the general public and suggesting that transgender young people are not so different from their peers.

There is no mention of extra challenges faced by transgender adolescents from Indigenous, multicultural, or low-socioeconomic backgrounds. A focus on increasing representation of these groups will likely have a positive impact on their members. Regardless, First Day reinforces the importance of providing transgender adolescents with protective factors to enable them to live balanced, fulfilling lives.

We believe that First Day could be added to any psychiatrist's recommendation list for supporting transgender young people and their families.

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