As we look at mental health issues of children and adolescents, researchers and clinicians seek the best ways to find such problems, with the grand goals of detecting as well as initiating early management as needed for mental health disorders. In study by Kass et al,1 English-speaking parents and caregivers of individuals aged 5 to 21 years who were living at home were given a survey asking about their views on mental health screening for their children. This survey covered 21 timely mental health screening topics and was available between July 11 and 14, 2021, and the survey analyses occurred between November 2021 and November 2022. The results involved 972 parents and caregivers between ages 21 and 65 years from 19 countries, which included 265 participants from the US, 282 from the UK, 171 from Canada, and 254 from 16 other countries.

The data reported by Kass et al1 suggest that most of the parents and caregivers supported annual mental health screening of their children that occurs in their primary care offices and also involves screening for learning problems; although parents preferred that they themselves be asked about the mental health of their children (ie, parent self-report), most indicated they would allow direct screening of their children (child self-reports), especially as the child matures, and most preferred that the results be shared by the physician(s) (or a psychologist, if available) in the primary care office. Other conclusions can be reached from perusing the findings of this survey, including that screening at home was acceptable to most of these parents, and although the surveyed topics overall were acceptable to parents in various countries, some parental discomfort was elicited by having them consider their children in light of such arduous problems or topics as suicidal ideation, gender identity, firearms, and substance use or abuse.

The data from Kass et al1 are consistent with other research2-4 indicating potential concerns or questions parents may have about the mental health of their children and that parents welcome the opportunity to be asked by chosen health care persons. This is important information for clinicians to understand in view of the epidemiology of pediatric mental illness; indeed, research has revealed that 20% of children will experience some type of mental illness before age 18 years.5 Serious mental illness can develop early in life; research notes that 50% of individuals with serious mental illness may develop it by 14 years of age and 75% by 24 years.6 Tragically, an 86% increase in the rate of death by suicide has been reported for persons 10 to 19 years of age in the US between 2007 and 2017.7 Since the survey by Kass et al took place during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2022 and reports of mental health issues such as suicide reports to US poison control centers for individuals aged 6 to 19 years had variable patterns during this time,8 one wonders what effects doing this parental survey during the pandemic may have had on the overall research results.

What we learn from the study by Kass et al1 is that parents around the world are concerned with the mental health of their children and are willing to answer questions regarding these issues. Clinicians have a wide variety of options in this regard, as assorted tools (ie, parent reports, child reports) are being developed to screen parents and children in primary care offices, in the home, and in schools. The key is to ask parents about their children and children about themselves using validated screening tools and to find children with various mental health concerns or disorders as early as possible to provide mental health management that may involve integrated mental health screening and management in primary care offices.9
The study by Kass and colleagues\(^1\) was conducted by 8 excellent scholars from well-known centers in New York (New York City and Orangeburg); Chicago, Illinois; Bethesda, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Brazil (Porto Alegre and São Paulo).\(^1\) Readers will appreciate that the statistical analysis of this study included mixed-effects logistic regression models. The findings of Kass et al\(^1\) have suggested that parents around the world are similar human beings who love their children, are concerned about the mental health of their children in a complex world, and welcome the opportunity to tell interested primary care clinicians about their children. Clinicians can use these data to increase efforts to screen their pediatric patients for mental health problems using a variety of screening techniques to identify problems early in childhood and/or adolescence. Sensitive topics can be screened and dealt with as well, including suicidality, substance abuse, and gender identity.\(^1,5-10\) Clinicians, researchers, and parents are all in the same exciting and fascinating journey seeking to understand the mental health of children and learning to help them as much as possible for their overall maximal health as they experience life in this challenging 21st century. There is much clinicians can do for these parents and children; the encouragement and guidance from these respected researchers is greatly appreciated.

**ARTICLE INFORMATION**

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