Infant and Toddler Development

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All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work.

—Calvin Coolidge

Learning Objectives:
1. Recognize the normal progression of development across various domains within the context of health supervision
2. Provide guidance to parents regarding normal development across various ages in early childhood
3. Identify and evaluate aberrations from normal development early in order to make appropriate interventions and referrals

Primary References:

Editor’s Note: This module provides an overview of developmental assessment and common problems. More extensive discussion on topics pertinent to growth and development (such as literacy, hearing, vision, and temperament) is provided in dedicated chapters elsewhere in the curriculum.

CASE ONE:

Mr. Ment brings his 9-month-old, Dev, in for a well-child visit. He is surprised to learn that there are no vaccinations due, and asks you “why’d I have to interrupt my day to pick Dev up from day care for this visit when he’s not even sick?”

1. What can you explain to Mr. Ment regarding the benefits of developmental surveillance and screening? What is the difference between surveillance and screening?

2. What domains should be considered during assessment of development?

CASE continued:

Dev passes all areas on the developmental screen with flying colors, and Mr. Ment beams with pride at his son’s progress. He asks what else he can be doing to further support his son’s development.
3. How can parents best promote their child’s development?

CASE TWO:

You are seeing a new patient, Miles, for his 18-month well-child visit. You review the developmental screening form just completed by his mother, Mrs. Stone, and note that he received failing scores for the motor, communication, and cognitive domains and a borderline score for the social-emotional domain. Mrs. Stone is concerned as Miles is not yet walking. Upon further questioning, you learn that he has recently started cruising and just started saying mama. You note that he uses an immature pincer grasp to pick up his cereal.

4. What are your initial thoughts about Miles? What else do you want to know about his history? What should you look for on exam?

5. What are the next steps you should take?

CASE THREE:

Mrs. Peach brings her 2-year-old daughter Deelai S. for a visit because the child’s daycare teacher is concerned that she is behind in her speech. The mother states that she is not worried, but did not want to ignore the teacher’s concerns. She estimates she says about 20 words and that about twenty-five percent of her speech is understood by strangers. Her development across other domains is normal.

6. How concerned should you be about this history? What are some important questions to ask the mother?

7. What are potential causes of language delay? What should be done next?
CASE FOUR:

Mr. and Mrs. Rish bring their 15-month-old boy Jib to your office for a routine visit. You ask about his speech and they tell you that Jib is “making all sorts of sounds” and appears to respond when they hold him and talk to him. He has said both “mama and dada” and is able to follow simple commands. He is interactive and social and frequently points and gestures. The parents do say that his teachers at daycare are concerned that Jib’s expressive language is not progressing. He has no physical abnormalities and passed his newborn otoacoustic emissions (OAE) hearing screening.

8. Should you pursue further investigations? If so, why and what are they?

Additional References:

Resources:
2. Information from CDC on parenting and behavioral guidance.
4. Information from Zero to Three, a non-profit organization devoted to early childhood health. http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer
5. Information from AAP on development. http://www2.aap.org/sections/dbpeds/
9. Information on toxic stress and resiliency (includes extensive list of resources to share with families). http://aap.org/theresilienceproject
10. Evidence-based interventions for the primary care setting
    Healthy Steps: https://www.healthysteps.org/
    Video Interaction Project: https://www.videointeractionproject.org/
    Incredible Years: http://www.incredibleyears.com/
    Triple P: http://www.triplep.net/glo-en/home/
    Parent Child Interaction Therapy: http://www.pcit.org/