Literacy Development & Reach Out and Read

Rita Das, MD, PhD & Sondra Bogursky, MD

I find television very educating. Every time someone turns on the set I go into the other room and read a book.

― Groucho Marx

Learning Objectives:
1. Identify the sequence of language and literacy development in young children
2. Understand the importance of evaluation of language and literacy in routine pediatric health supervision
3. Learn about the goals of Reach Out and Read
4. Investigate ways to effectively use Reach Out and Read to help parents foster acquisition of language and literacy skills in young children (especially in at-risk populations)
5. Learn about the resources available to help families with children with known or suspected disorders of language or reading

Primary References:

CASE ONE:

Al Fabet is a 6-month-old infant who presents for his well child visit. He appears healthy and is growing well. He rolled at 4 months, and can now almost sit by himself. He is about to start to crawl, according to his mother. He lives with his mother and grandmother in local low-income housing. His mother never finished high school and works as a waitress in a restaurant. During the day, his grandmother cares for him as well as two other children in the home. Al’s mother and grandmother want him to be as smart as possible, and ask what they can do to help.

1. What can you tell Al’s family about his language development? What should they expect in the months to come?

2. What are the factors that put children like Al at risk for poor language development?
CASE continued:

You hand baby Al a copy of “Good Night Moon” and his family looks puzzled. Al looks at the book and reaches to take it from your hands. As he then proceeds to drool all over the book, his family thanks you and begins to pack up his things to leave.

3. How should you approach the discussion of early childhood reading with Al’s family? What are the important points to emphasize?

4. What is the evidence supporting early childhood reading programs?

CASE continued:

It is time for Al’s 24-month visit. His mother reports he is doing “fine.” On more specific questioning, you uncover that he only uses 5-6 words, and prefers to point and gesture to get the things he wants. His mom says he babbles at home, although he is silent in the office. He interacts well, and appears to understand some simple commands from his mother.

5. What additional history do you want to obtain? What are the possible etiologies for Al’s failure to speak?
6. What guidance you would give families along with their Reach Out and Read recommended books at the following visits?

(a) 12 months

(b) 24 months

(c) 36 months

(d) 48 months

Additional References:

Resources:
1. Early Intervention Programs, by state. www.birth23.org/Programs/OtherStates.asp
2. Reach Out and Read program website. www.reachoutandread.org