

NURSES' VOICE FROM THE FIELD

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGING CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Quality child growth and development are important tools in assisting today's children to become the adults of the future. Hence, developmental delays in young children have an impact not only on a child's abilities to learn new skills, but also in the opportunities of the greater community or society. In this regard, parents and caregivers are the most well-equipped to prevent the child from experiencing developmental delays. Children will learn to trust the person who sensitively interacts with them and this trust provides a foundation for future learning, growth, and development. This paper looks at the importance of encouraging child development through the parents or guardians of children, since they are inevitably linked to a child's learning, and they know their own children better than anyone else. Parents and guardians who do not have the skills required to monitor and encourage the development of young children can and should be trained by professionals. This research reveals that training parents and guardians to use the Developmental Surveillance and Promotion Manual in monitoring and encouraging development of young children is a very important way to prevent future developmental delays.

Keywords: Child development, developmental delays, quality child growth

Introduction

Quality child growth and development are important tools in assisting today's children to become the adults of the future, because as the leaders of tomorrow, they will be responsible for the country. Unfortunately, some surveys suggest that developmental delay in young children is increasing in developing countries (Prime Minister's Office, 2016). According to data collection by the Department of Health, the survey results of developmental screening, in children at age 9, 18, 30 and 42, indicate the rates of developmental delay as 19.84, 24.50, 22.38, and 25.33 respectively. This survey shows that 32.79% of young children have gross motor skills delay, 53.21% have fine motor skills delay, 42.83% have expressive language skills delay, 47.00% have receptive language skills delay, and 32.54% have personal and social skills delay (Ministry of Public Health, 2017).

The Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security have created the Developmental Surveillance and Promotion Manual to be used to monitor and encourage child development. This manual is provided free to parents and guardians. However, studies on the manual's impact reveal that the majority of parents or guardians, whose children have developmental delays, do not know how to use it effectively (Prime Minister's Office, 2016).

Impacts of Developmental Delayed

Developmental delays in young children have an impact on a child's abilities to learn new skills, resulting in multiple barriers to healthy development of the child (Piccolo, Segabinazi¹, Falceto, Fernandes, Bandeiral, Trentini¹, Hutz¹, & Salles, 2016, Winstona, R. & Chicot, R., 2016). These developmental barriers include: diminished skills in verbal comprehension, physical development, eye-hand coordination, learning, thinking, problem solving, essential skills in communication, social interaction and self-care in daily living (Sakolsatayadorn, 2016). To help prevent developmental delays, nurses, doctors, and other specialists in hospitals and universities can provide effective training programs. These programs can be used to teach the child's caregiver how to monitor and encourage development in young children (Cohen, 2017, Piccolo, Segabinazi¹, Falceto, Fernandes, Bandeiral, Trentini¹, Hutz¹, & Salles, 2016, Winstona & Chicot, 2016).

Growth and development are important indicators of a child's overall health (Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, 2018). The first few years of life are a crucial period of time and provide the basis to further a child's healthy development. Specifically, a child's neurological, and physical development are vital in

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achieving their potential in terms of long-term positive growth and development. (Piccolo, Segabinazi1, Falceto, Fernandes, Bandeiral, Trentini1, Hutz1, & Salles, 2016). The Healthy Growth and Development Guideline concluded that the most important factor in contributing to successful child development is an active parent and or caregiver (Ministry of Health and Long-term care, 2018).

The parents are the child's first teachers, and subsequently, a major influence on their child's learning (Ceka1& Murati, 2016). Parents and caregivers are role models and are the most well-equipped to prevent the child from experiencing developmental delays. They are inevitably linked to a child's learning, and they know their own children better than anyone else (Moore, 2015, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2014). As a result, children will learn to trust the person who sensitively interacts with them. Hence, this trust provides a foundation for future learning, growth, and development. They should be observant and provide early detection as well as encourage the development of their children (Jawad, Sabri, & Ibrahim, 2017).

Finally, developmental delays have a negative impact on children's interactions in their environment, and this can affect a child's ability to learn new skills. Development is dynamic and involves the maturation of interrelated systems. So, developmental delays in children can trigger a complex and damaging cycle for their future development (Piccolo, Segabinazi1, Falceto, Fernandes, Bandeiral, Trentini, Hutz, & Salles, 2016). Losatienkit (2015), Director of Health Promotion Center of Thailand, said that the countries that have more developmental delays in young children will lose opportunities to develop. The survey has determined that the average IQ (Intelligence Quotient) in Thai children aged 9 to 10 is 91.6, lower than other countries in Asia. This result can be directly related to developmental delays when they were younger. In fact, developmental delays cannot be linked to disability until the child begins attending school (Tepparud, Mukdakasem, Seubnuch, & Jaturaporn, 2014). The findings show that they were slower in one or more of the five developmental domains, which includes: gross motor skills, fine motor skills, receptive language skills, and personal and social skills (Prime Minister's Office, 2016). Therefore, early detection and early intervention is the better solution to decrease developmental delays in young children and thus, enable them to learn new skills as they grow.

Encouraging Parents and Guardians Towards Child Development

Parents and guardians who do not have the skills required to monitor and encourage the development of young children can and should be trained by professionals. According to Adult Learning Theory, a good way to learn is to learn by doing. The reason this works is that adults memorize by training rather than

just reading. When adults learn and practice, they obtain the skills and can more readily memorize the contents (Palis & Quiros, 2014). Training programs are the best way to educate parents and guardians because they provide a two-way dialogue. When specialists lecture, parents and guardians can listen, ask and participate with them. Moreover, they can practice in a small group and repeat until they can monitor and encourage their young children by themselves. Consequently, childcare professionals and specialists must supervise and support parents through individual and group coaching (Beaudoin, Sebire, & Couture, 2014, Landry, 2014)

Conclusion

Child development is important. Parents and guardians must be made aware of the importance of monitoring and encouraging the development of their children in the first few years of life. This is because the formative years in a child's life are the most important period of growth and development and are directly related to learning other skills in the future. Children, who are not monitored and encouraged during the early developmental period, may experience developmental delays when they begin attending school. Children who have a developmental delay in gross motor skills, fine motor skills, language skills, and personal and social skills will be lacking in physical development skills, abilities of eye-hand coordination, abilities in verbal comprehension, expression, and speech production, abilities to learn, think and solve problems, communication skills, social interaction, and self-care respectively (Piccolo, Segabinazi1, Falceto, Fernandes, Bandeiral, Trentini, Hutz, & Salles, 2016, Sakolsatayadorn, 2016). Therefore, training parents and guardians to use the Developmental Surveillance and Promotion Manual to monitor and encourage the development of young children is a very important way to prevent future developmental delays. This is because the caregiver can detect any abnormality their children might exhibit and then they can encourage that specific area to be developed, before the children experience any developmental delays. The research has determined that parental knowledge is a factor related to child development outcomes (Sander & Morawska, 2014) and educating parents is a way to improve children's knowledge and skills (Jawad & Sabri, 2017). In conclusion, professionals should supervise, support, advice, and empower parents and caregivers to encourage the development of their children. They should participate in individual and group coaching programs because they are specialists and they possess the education, training and experiences that can be shared with parents.

References

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