

The 131st Annual Meeting (November 15-19, 2003) of APHA
4159.0: Tuesday, November 18, 2003 - 12:30 PM

Abstract #64975

Developmental and medical status of infants and toddlers referred to the Early Intervention Program

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The Early Intervention Program ("EI") is an entitlement providing screening, evaluation and services for infants and toddlers (birth-36 months old) with developmental delay. Data are presented from a descriptive study intended to clarify the developmental status of children referred by their primary pediatrician for EI services, and the contributory medical conditions that affect them. The setting was a tertiary care hospital in New York City. Developmental status was established using the Bayley Scales of Infant Development Mental Development Index (MDI). Contributory medical conditions were coded as: birth weight < 1000 grams; genetic or inborn metabolic disorder; congenital organ anomaly; primary neurologic disorder; or infectious disease like meningitis. Data are drawn from 575 consecutive EI eligibility assessments performed over a three year period. We found 57% have a serious contributory medical condition. Mean MDI=64 (~2 standard deviations below the mean). To control for possible sampling bias because of the tertiary care setting, results for a subset of the tertiary care patients were compared with those for a sample of identically referred, comparably evaluated, and demographically similar patients from a community hospital. Within this comparison, we found the following: the degree of cognitive delay is comparable, mean MDI=65 in the community sample compared with 67 in the tertiary care subset. Overall prevalence of contributory medical conditions is lower in the community sample (28% compared with 45%, $p < .05$). For patients < 18 months, medical involvement is comparable (75% compared with 70%). Policy and programmatic implications for EI are discussed.

Severe Mental Illness and Other Disorders Among Children

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