Autism in premature children

In the UK and Ireland, a group of scientists studying autism spectrum disorders in births with less than twenty-six weeks gestating found that these extremely preterm children were at risk for ASDs in middle childhood. They suggested that symptoms of autism were due to abnormal neurocognitive development.

This may be due to a variety of things that these children went through. Factors such as being male, not having been fed breast milk, abnormal cerebral ultrasound scanning results, and breech birth are independently associated with ASD symptoms. Two studies calculated a 21% to 25% rate for autism spectrum symptoms in very preterm infants from their samples. However, these infants are already behind in development. In childhood, the people who actually present autism spectrum symptoms is lower. This shows that there is quite a bit of development from infancy to childhood, preventing the child from developing autism. No child in this study was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. This is probably because of the increased risk of cognitive and neurodevelopmental impairment. With the diagnostic criteria of Asperger's involving no speech delay, there is little connection from the extremely preterm development and normal speech development with Autism in this sample of extremely preterm children.

This study is relevant, because it addresses autism development due to environmental factors, rather than genetics. Many complications (Continued on page 2)

Workplace Culture for People with Disabilities

It is known that a supportive social network on the job can lead to greater job satisfaction. Interpersonal relationships and social inclusion are necessary for people with disabilities transitioning from school to work. The problem is the amount of segregation that occurs in the workplace, which separates people with disabilities from their non-disabled brethren. On the job, there is a discrepancy between other coworkers and the disabled in terms of social interaction, despite social integration. Things such as working independently from other people hampers the creation of meaningful employee relationships. This is clearly detrimental to all people in question, as people with disabilities

Special points of interest:
- Autism is more prevalent in the extremely preterm
- Changing the workplace atmosphere is beneficial for greater social integration
- Social training for romantic encounters is necessary for healthy relationships
- Social deficiencies and self-injurious behavior are most stressful for parents with autistic children

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Premature Children

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during pregnancy can arise from the health of the mother, the health of the baby, and poor genetically derived biochemical interactions between both. This can cause the child to be born quite early.

There is a connection made between these preemies and the children of Romania during the time of Ceauşescu. Many Romanian orphans have or had autistic features, such as hyperactivity, inattention, cognitive impairment, and attachment disorders. There is no doubt that they were raised in an abnormal psychosocial and physical environment during what scientists believe to be a critical period in the social development in the brain. Likewise, for the extremely preterm, they too exist in unusual circumstances. The environment surrounding the very early baby may contribute to the development of autism.

Workplace Culture

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miss out on a chance to integrate with their peers. The said peers will not experience knowing someone probably not-so-different from them. They could miss out on a lot, simply because of social barriers.

Previous attempts at breaking down the social barrier included changing the behavior of the disabled so that it conforms to the work. Another method is to have coworkers instruct and support the disabled employee. Unfortunately, these methods are inconsistent, as they don’t necessarily create a healthy social interaction and networking within the workplace community. There is a third way of integrating people with disabilities within the workplace and that is to develop workplace culture. Workplace culture is essentially the general atmosphere of a place. It involves what is socially and behaviorally typical for that group of people working together. If the workplace climate is altered, social integration may be easier to attain. There are four criteria studied by Novak and Rogan that outline workplace culture in relation to socially integrating disabled people.

The first thing that is essential is the structure of contact. People with disabilities should have job descriptions and schedule similar to that of other employees. They should work with other employees to complete tasks and also follow the same chain of command. This allows for more opportunities for social interaction to take place.

Employees with more typical job situations are more likely to be socially integrated at work. If the disabled employee has similar responsibilities and a compensation package to other employees, then there a greater air of equality. This is vital for employee social integration.

For more outcome-dependent employees, there is more social interaction with the disabled. The disabled employee’s vocational competence was found to be weighted more heavily when working with this structure. There was more of a focus on the person’s ability to do the job than ability to socialize, communicate, etc. If the employees are made to be interdependent, more interaction will occur.

Employers and supervisors set the tone for social inclusion for people with disabilities. The views of the employer towards disabilities is necessary for understanding the level of employee interaction.
Interpersonal Violence in Romantic Relationships

People with developmental disabilities are quite capable of having romantic relationships. In fact, those relationships are quite similar to those of people without developmental disabilities. For example, couples attend movies, go out to eat, or simply hang out. The definition of boyfriend/girlfriend is varied, ranging from an exchange of feelings to asking if a person is available to a physical symbol, like a ring.

Women in particular place great value on partnered relationships. Women with disabilities are more likely to experience abuse than their non-disabled counterparts. However, from this study, there was no significant connection between gender and interpersonal violence. So, both men and women experience it, both emotionally and physically. In this particular study, men proportionately reported emotional abuse more than women. Interestingly, men put greater emphasis on “feelings towards each other” as a definition of a relationship. Sexual abuse was reported more from females.

A lack of specific sociosexual knowledge, as well as relationship skills, are contributors to violence, as well as poor communication skills and problems with problem solving. Not having the specifics about consent or proper touching can lead to abuse or being accused of abuse. Not having a clear idea of one’s rights can leave one quite vulnerable. Nearly 50% of the people being abused were involved with drugs or alcohol. There didn’t seem to be an association between abuse and the level of staff support involved.

Of the 24 people that reported abuse, 15 of them sought help. Police, family, and friends were the most sought after sources of assistance. Generally, those people were content with the help they received.

This study was very small. It utilized 47 people from a number of 172 in Alaska. The people had sufficient verbal skills to answer interview questions, were not severely mentally disabled, and

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Parental Stress in Autism

Mothers often have the major caretaking responsibility, yet caring for a child with autism can cause considerable stress for both family members. Autism begins early and is associated with various personal, family, and vocational problems, as well as sensory and motor issues. According to some studies, raising a child with autism causes more depression in mothers than raising a child with an intellectual disability or a typically developed child. This may be due to shared genetic information in terms of communication deficits and social impairments, as well as the symptoms a child can present.

Self-injurious behavior is most stressful to both parents, as well as social

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Journal Articles:

Ekas, N. and T. L. Williams

Johnson, Samantha, et al

Novak, Jeanne A. and Patricia M. Rogan

Ward, Karen, et al.

Relationships

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lived in a home without their parents and with three or less peers. These people also did not have continuous supervision. The results of the study indicate that emotional abuse, such as name-calling and threats, was the most common form. Rates of abuse were quite high within the sample population. This suggests that people with developmental disabilities would benefit greatly from training in positive relationship development. The quality of life for these people must also include good romantic relationships and sexual identity, as well as supportive friends and emotional well-being.

Parental Stress

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functioning. However, mothers were more stressed out by stereotypical behaviors, visual preoccupations, and inappropriate emotional responses. Fathers found communication deficiencies and anxiety responses to be the most perturbing. While the diagnostic triad itself can be very stressful;

however, behavioral problems, namely self-regulation problems and externalizing behavior, may also be predictive of maternal and paternal stress, respectively. Behavior problems could weigh heavily in determining the stress levels of the parents.