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Early Identification And Referral For Intervention And Support Services

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Abstract:

Every child is unique. Children progress rapidly in their early years. Screening and Identification of Disabilities Screening is a procedure that identifies a person who needs further assessment for diagnosis of a disability. Alternatively said, screening helps in 'suspecting' disability in a person. A screening procedure does not 'confirm' disability, but helps in short listing for detailed assessment. Screening is assessing a whole population in order to identify those individuals for whom some intervention in development would be beneficial. For example 'New-born Hearing Screening' is mandatory in most countries. The 1-3-6 protocol emphasised in the Position Statement of the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing recommends that all new-borns be screened for hearing loss by one month of age, appropriate amplification be provided by three months of age and early intervention needs to commence not later than six months of age. Though this is yet to become mandatory in India, there have been initiatives to create awareness and undertake early screening on the part of National Institutes and some NGOs.

Key words: Screening, Identification, assessment, emphasized, awareness, Referrals.

Introduction

Every child is unique. Children progress rapidly in their early years. Early identification is the key strategy in catering for children with special needs. Early identification, which involves a combination of routine surveillance and screenings, greatly increases the likelihood that a young child with or at risk for developmental and behavioural delays will be identified and referred to prevention and early intervention services. Identification is an outcome of screening. It is a process by which children with disabilities are identified for further assessment. Here, two types of screening can be distinguished, immediate screening to identify an existing need, and predictive screening intended to identify (and so prevent) a future need. Seven points to be kept in mind prior to screening. Educators have frequently expressed concern about young children who are exposed to known environmental risk factors associated with the development of chronic behaviour problems (e.g., poverty, domestic violence, child maltreatment). Nevertheless, a societal commitment to address these environmental risk factors by identifying young children who are at risk for or are demonstrating chronic problem behaviours and to provide effective prevention and early intervention services has not been forthcoming. Although researchers have developed a number of effective early identification, prevention, and early intervention strategies, several significant barriers to the widespread implementation of those practices remain. The authors discuss these issues as they affect children who have emotional or behavioural disorders. They argue for societal action to change current policies and practices for young children.

- a. Frequency of the condition being screened for
- b. Seriousness of the condition
- c. Availability of effective treatment
- d. Timing of screening
- e. Reliability of Screening method and tool
- f. Value of early detection
- g. Cost effectiveness

What is the concept of early identification and intervention?

Early Identification refers to the process of recognizing any disability or developmental variations in early childhood years and to understand the need of early intervention. The purpose of early identification is to determine which children have developmental difficulties that may become obstacles to their learning or may place the children at risk.

Thus, there is an urgent and substantial need to identify as early as possible those young children in need of services. Four components of an early intervention system Physical development, including vision and hearing, Communication development, Social or emotional development and Adaptive development. Early identification of children with developmental delays is important in the early stages as it facilitates early intervention. Early intervention refers to the services established and

designed specifically to identify and treat such developmental delays. Is the term used to describe the services and supports that are available to babies and young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. May include speech therapy, physiotherapy, and other types of services based on the needs of the child and family.

Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships); 2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication [and early literacy]) and 3. Use of appropriate behaviours to meet their needs.

Definition

Early Intervention is a term, which broadly refers to a wide range of experiences and supports provided to children, parents and families during the pregnancy, infancy and early childhood period of development. [Dunst - 1996] Early Intervention is the introduction of planned programming deliberately timed and arranged in order to alter the anticipated or projected course of development [Siegal - 1972]. Early intervention (EI) is a system of professional services provided to children from birth until about five years of age who are disabled, have delayed development or are at risk of delayed development. To help children with disabilities, it is essential to focus on the earliest years of development, since this is a critically important time for early learning which powerfully affects the child's future life course. Along with medical and rehabilitation services (where ever required), the children are actively engaged in an instructional program many times a week, throughout the year. It involves planned professional intervention organized around relatively brief periods of time for the very young children so that they may receive sufficient adult attention. The Early Intervention Program offers a variety of therapeutic and support services to eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, including:

- a. Family education and counselling, home visits, and parent support groups.
- b. Special education.
- c. Speech pathology and audiology.
- d. Occupational therapy.
- e. Physical therapy.
- f. Psychological services.
- g. Medical services.
- h. Nutrition services.
- i. Social work services.
- j. Assistive technology devices and services.

Steps in the Early Intervention Process

- Identification or Referral. Parents may refer their children for EI, or a professional (i.e. a paediatrician) may identify them as requiring services through Child Find.
- Parental Consent.
- Assessment.
- Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- IFSP Review.
- Transition.

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Importance of early intervention

Intervention also brings the family a greater understanding of their child's needs and how to break learning down into small steps for their child. When children know what they are expected to do and can be successful, they have fun learning in almost any activity, and want to learn more.

We are passing through an era which has seen rapid changes in the concept of the child and is burgeoning ahead taking long strides in understanding normal child development. There is mounting evidence documented regarding the deleterious effects of disability and handicapping condition on the normal development of a child. It is also a fact that these effects can be minimized or prevented if children can be identified as those who are at risk or have a disability or a handicapping condition through Early Intervention programmes. Thus, early intervention programmes can be preventive, curative and remedial. To realize the importance of early intervention we have to rationalize our thinking on the subject.

The early intervention programmes derive their support from the various theories of learning and the empirical research on human development. When we look back into the history of child development, "Predetermines" - the concept which held hereditary and genetic endowment as the sole important factor for development. In this view there was mere unfolding of development which was predetermined and unaffected by external influences. Then came the controversy of nature versus nurture. But the current theories support the dynamic interaction between the genetic endowment and the environment and neither of them, in isolation, can account for normal development. One of the basic premises of Early Intervention is that it can bring positive changes and human traits are malleable. It is said that brain responds to the environment (experience) by adapting and changing its structure which is initially determined genetically. These structured and functional changes produced by endogenous and or exogenous influences that may occur at any time during the individual's life history is defined as plasticity. Of relevance to our subject is the plasticity of the learning brain where there are structured and functional changes due to environmental influences. It is because of this unique property of plasticity of the brain that it is able to cope with damage and ever changing environment.

Thus, provision of specification of functions to systems is guided by stimuli, information and challenges from the environment. Researchers have also pointed out that the amount of cortex occupied by a body part relates not to the size of that

part

but to its sensory or motor sophistication. Thus in humans the finger tips occupy large areas of the cortex and the toes only small ones. A number of experts have highlighted the rapid growth and development in the first few years of life. We all are aware of the extraordinary rapid growth and development in the first few years of life. A few distinct observations of early years of life are:

- 1) Myelination is almost completed by 2 years of age.
- 2) Most of the gross motor and a great extent of fine motor milestones are reached.
- 3) The child independently moves about, exploring, manipulating and at the same time learning and acquiring knowledge.
- 4) During 7-36 months most young children acquire the ability to understand most of the language they ultimately use in ordinary conversation throughout their lives
- 5) Personality traits are also stabilized by the age of two. It is argued that social patterns probably will not change significantly after the age of two without further drastic

Referrals

Early Intervention Referral Process. Early intervention is a term used to describe the services and supports that are available to babies and young children ages 0-3 with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. Suitable specialists are of vital importance for providing interventions. Referrals to specialists for opinion and advice and investigations help in understanding and confirming the diagnosis, thereby assisting in planning appropriate individualized intervention. For some children with locomotor impairments, hearing impairment, and others disability, aids and appliances are recommended to correct and prevent the setting of deformities. Other referrals for family-related aspects are made when there are family problems like marital discord, alcoholism, financial crisis or hearing impairment in the family.

The Parent Training Program substantiates the interventions by addressing those issues that are of common concern for the parents. Another vital aspect of parent training programme is the parental motivation program where some potential parents are identified and trained to train other parents to sustain and encourage family members for carrying out home based programmes. Each local government has obligation to ensure that all infants and toddlers with disabilities in the area who needs early intervention services are identified, located, and assessed. As part of fulfilling that responsibility, a child find system needs to be developed which must include procedures for referring a child to early intervention services. Anyone may refer a child to early intervention. For example, someone may notice that a baby or toddler seems to have a developmental delay of some sort, a disability, or a diagnosed physical or mental condition. That person needs to refer to the early intervention service delivery agencies, which can evaluate the child and determine if he or she does, in fact, have a developmental delay or disability. In several districts, has established District Disability Rehabilitation Centre for this purpose.

Referrals at birth

Someone notices” and “referring” the child and family to the early intervention system may happen at birth. Often this is so for children who are diagnosed at birth with a specific condition or who experience significant prematurity, very low birth weight, illness, or surgery soon after being born.

Conclusion:

Early identification and intervention referral data flow is complex, with opportunities for loss of children to follow-up. This study describes how E intervention referrals occur and provides examples of how communication and access to information may be improved.

The crucial issues are to make services accessible, to involve parents and provide services to facilitate maximum development where children with disabilities reach their full potential. Governmental efforts, especially Ministry of Health should collect comprehensive date on children with disability and 5 year targets should be set for enrolment of children with disability and closely monitors action plans implemented. There is a need to establish adequate early detection and identification services in hospitals community based health care services with referrals system to Early Intervention service. Routine screening for high risk pregnancies and babies will help in early detection of disabilities.

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