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## Article Review

Article Review
This paper focuses on the clinical assessment, diagnosis and management of children aged 18-24 that are thought to have autism. Since there are difficulties with diagnosing autism at such a young age, the article selected discusses these issues while providing the most recent data available on this subject. This includes presenting the symptoms that do appear at this age, reviewing how successful current methods to detect autism at this stage are and what the best treatment plans are composed of. Also included in this article is how to respond if a child under the age of 2 is thought to have autism.
Since autistic disorder is the most significant developmental disability, is present in 1 out of every 150 children and is often not diagnosed until a child turns 4 years of age or older, although the signs can present themselves between 12-24 months of age, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other organizations have set forth information on early screening for autistic disorder. This is because parents often see the warning signs long before the condition is ascertained. The problem, however, is the current framework to conduct these screenings has not been applied to this age group and its success rate is a great unknown. Therefore, this study sought to answer these questions:
- What information is available about the early symptoms of autistic disorders?
- Can a family physician diagnose an autistic disorder in a child under 24 months of age?
- What is the best format to detect if a child under 2 years of age has autism?
- What problems present themselves in diagnosing this condition in this age group?
- What treatments can be provided to children under 2 years old if this disorder is suspected or confirmed?
This study was conducted simply by analyzing the available research on the topic and drawing conclusions from it. Data from sources such as The Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers, The Screening Tool for Autism in 2-Year-Olds, The Bayley Scale of Infant Development, the Mullen Scales of Early Learning, the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales and the MacArthur-Bates-Communication Development Inventory should all be evaluated to determine if autism can be diagnosed under 24 months of age and how it can be successfully treated. In addition to these measures, the study discussed the use of home videos to observe the child’s behavior and watching the child interact in a clinical office setting. All these actions and tools should be employed to deduce the child’s condition.
The study found that recent research in this area has provided significant advances in the early detection of autistic disorder. Although there are still problems with verifying the results because the work is so new with this age group, there are many tools available for children that are suspected or confirmed to have an autistic disorder such as evaluating a child’s development closely, taking into account the parents’ concerns in how the child responds to simple social games, makes eye contact and reacts to their surroundings and having a child’s hearing tested. A child would then be referred to a specialist for developmental disabilities and treatment would be applied according to the child’s specific needs.
In my opinion, the article was very thorough in discussing all facets of how to ascertain and treat autistic disorder in children under 2 years of age. Since this a relatively new area of research, it is only logical they would conduct the study in this fashion, as the information would need to be reviewed and there really was not much available on the
This article inspired three ideas for me. The first is the parents should begin to monitor the child’s development at a very young age, because isn’t it possible for this condition to be noticed and diagnosed even earlier than 18-24 months? This definitely has merit. Also, shouldn’t parents be made aware of the high incidence of autistic disorder so they can be prepared in case their child has the condition? Knowledge is power and there might not be enough information pertaining to how significant autistic disorders truly are. Lastly, is there anything a parent can do to avert the development of this disorder? Are there games they could play with the child or certain activities they could engage shortly after birth that would divert that child from becoming autistic? In addition, will there eventually be a biological marker to determine if a child is more at risk?
The research will certainly have a huge impact on diagnosing children of this age group with autism. My friend’s daughter recently had concerns her daughter was autistic and this is exactly the type of studies she reviewed before taking her daughter to a developmental specialist when she turned 2. She started worrying about her daughter’s development when she was a year old and could not find any resources to help figure it out. Fortunately, she was not autistic and simply slow to develop, but I’m sure there are hundreds of thousands of
parents that go through the same thing and this will definitely have a tremendous effect on how autism can be detected very early.