

## Editorial: “Promising Practices, Models, and Research in the Early Identification of Young Children with Disabilities”

All children have a right to grow and develop to reach their optimal potential [1]. Young children who show signs of a delay or disability are in need of an effective system that can identify them early so that prevention and/or early intervention can begin as soon as possible. Communities worldwide are in dire need for systems change [2]. Here are some of the many challenges that exist in the early identification of young children with disabilities.

- Many children in need of prevention/intervention services are not identified in their early childhood years. Child Find efforts are non-existent in many places. If a Child Find system does exist, it often has little accountability built into monitoring its impact [2-4].
- Public awareness initiatives are often ineffective and/or non-existent [2].
- Access to services is a limitation in many areas [2,4].
- Referrals and service coordination are often fragmented and/or difficult for the child’s family to navigate [2,4,5].
- A lack of consistent and comprehensive developmental-behavioral screening is evident [2,4].

In order to identify children with developmental concerns, screening assessment needs to be coordinated with better referral and public awareness procedures and policies implemented. The use of research-based developmental screening tools is recommended [6]. Once a child is identified as needing early intervention supports and services, the use of appropriate assessment practices and performance monitoring can help determine the level of progress a child is making. This special issue highlights important research, practices, and models underway to aid in the early identification and assessment of young children at risk or who have delay/disability.

In a study on screening assessments, Alkherainej and Squires compare three screening tools used to identify young children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Their study indicates the feasibility of developmental-behavioral screening conducted online within a healthcare context. Their research on screening instruments has implications for social, education, and health care sectors.

Lee, Bagnato, and Pretti-Frontzcak compare conventional and authentic assessment practices in their study on utility and validity. Their findings are applicable to practitioners in search of authentic methods for observing and understanding a child’s development. Results have implications for improving assessment practices on a global scale.

A qualitative study was conducted to validate an assessment used to observe and monitor the development of young children. Macy, Bricker, Dionne, Grisham-Brown, Johnson, Slentz, Waddell, Behm, and Shrestha describe how an expert panel was used to investigate properties of third edition of the *Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Children (AEPS™)*.

Bricker, Squires, Franz, and Xie present a conceptual framework for early identification with a comprehensive and additive system. The authors show strategies for incorporating best practices used to identify young children through parent collaboration. The vignettes give the reader concrete examples of how this framework could be used in practice settings.

Steed and Banerjee present a conceptual framework for the early identification of young children with social emotional and behavioral issues. A linked system to help with early detection efforts of young children with emotional difficulties and challenging behaviors is provided. Practitioners working with young children and families can incorporate cohesive and aligned early detection practices so that resources are used efficiently.

An article written by Yockelson, Linder, and Asman focuses on practices used in the early identification process. The authors show how screening assessments can be used to address the unique needs of children and their teen parents. Examples are offered in their cross sector collaboration that could be applied in communities of practice around the world.

Horiguchi and Akiyama present a study conducted in their pediatric assessment unit in Tokyo, Japan. They examined the costs related to early identification of delay/disability. Results of their study showed differential costs were found based on the child's diagnosis. Implications for an in-clinic consultation system were found for early identification and resource utilization.

Keilty, Blasco, and Acar present a model of executive function (EF) to inform developmental and behavioral screening, eligibility assessment, and program planning in early childhood. Their article stresses the importance of EF for school success, as well as the limitations measuring EF in early childhood (e.g., lack of measures to assess EF). The EF model can be used to make decisions about early intervention assessment.

Haglund, Dahlgren, Källén, Gustafsson and Råstam examined the psychometric properties of a measure called the *Observation Scale for Autism* (OSA) to screen for early markers of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Young children in Sweden with ASD, Down syndrome, and typical development participated in the study. Results of their study have implications for using the OSA for early detection of ASD in children under the age of three.

Tzouridadou, Vouyoukas, and Anagnostopoulou explored the use of response to intervention (RtI) in an inclusive Kindergarten setting as a form of early identification in Thessaloniki, Greece. Researchers and undergraduate students at Aristotle University worked with Kindergarten teachers to implement RtI. A description of the Greek early identification paradigm is presented.

Busillo-Aguayo, Murawski, and Weiner describe an innovative mobile screening van used in Los Angeles, California to locate hard to reach children and families. Results of their screening project are reported. Their research has implications for Child Find programs in low income and diverse urban areas.

These articles in this special issue strive to improve practices, assessment methods, and system of early detection. Professionals may be able to improve early identification efforts by using some of the models/frameworks, suggestions, or outcomes from these articles. Young children and their families will benefit from an effective system designed to promptly and accurately respond to concerns about child development.

## REFERENCES

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