

Developmental delays among young children

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Study was conducted in Mahabubnagar district with tribal families. Children below two years were selected for the study, stratified and random sampling technique was used to select the villages. Children with developmental delays were identified by using Bayley scale and 30 children below twenty four months were selected after assessing with BSID scale for intervention programme. Results indicated that there was a steep increase in motor delays among children from the beginning of fourth month to till the end of fifth month. Failing of items in motor domain, might be due to poor nutritional status of infants and lack of early stimulation by mothers. Manipulation of objects was poor as these infant were delayed in motor co-ordination, active exploration during play was not seen, because it was observed that infants could not lift head and visually explore the space.

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The development that occurs from birth to three years provides the foundation for subsequent development across domains. Infant / toddler development proceeds in a predictable sequence. Infants crawl before they walk, babble before they talk and so on. But development varies from child to child. This integration of development across domains has implications for the overall course of a child's development. Several health and socio demographic predictors of delayed neurobehavioral development are common in the developing world and are likely to affect the neurobehavioral development of infants and young children. For example, research has shown effect of chronic malnutrition (i.e. stunting), iron deficiency anemia and low birth weight on delays in neurobehavioural development (Wachs, 2000). During the first 3 years of

life, child development is dynamic and involves the maturation of interrelated functioning such as cognitive, physical and socio-emotional capabilities. It is a period marked by rapid physical and neurological development and requires proper nutrition in order for the child to achieve those capabilities so that the child can reach their full potential not only in quality of life, but also in terms of educational achievement and earning potential (Chilton *et al.*, 2007). Under nutrition, both protein energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, directly affects many aspects of children's development. Children constitute the most vulnerable section of the community. The health status of the children serves as a sensitive indicator of the overall health of the entire community.

Study was conducted in Mahabubnagar district with tribal families. Children below two years were selected

for the study, stratified and random sampling technique was used to select the villages. Children with developmental delays were identified by using Bayley scale and 30 children below twenty four months were selected after assessing with BSID scale for intervention programme. Present study focuses on presenting results on developmental delays that were observed among the young children of 0- 6 months of age. Bayley scale of infant development was used for assessing the developmental status of children in tribal families. Interview schedule was developed for the study for gathering information on personal profile and general information. Results of the study were presented as below.

From the study it was found that children of three months of age had passed all the items which revealed that motor skills were good at the age of three months. It was also evident that the development of motor skills were in decreasing pace after three months of age. Thirty three percent of children in four months of age, could not perform some of the motor activities like effort to sit or pull themselves to sitting position. It was observed that there was a steep increase in motor delays among children from the beginning of fourth month to till the end of fifth month. It was noticed that diet of lactating women were restricted to few foods after delivering a child. They were given only rice and chutneys. It was found from the dietary survey that average diet intake of women were less than the recommended allowance, It was found from the group discussion that initiation of breast feeding was delayed for 4-6 hours. Failing of items in motor domain, might be due to poor nutritional status of infants and lack of early stimulation by mothers. It was observed that children were left in cradle ideally when mothers were at work. Playful movements would be limited when children were placed in cradles made with cloth for a longer time. Babies who spend a lot of time in equipment like cradles which keeps babies in stationery may actually impede their development (Abbott and Barlett, 2001). Poor stimulating environment and resources would lead to delayed motor skills. Positioning of babies properly for play will improve their motor abilities. Some parents place their infants on their backs during waking period as well. A study by Pin *et al.* (2007) found that an infant who spend more on waking hours on their backs may develop motor delays.

It could be reason that poor nutrition during lactation can also affect the growth and development of children.

Majority of children from five months of age showed delayed development, seventy eight to ninety nine per cent of children failed to perform some of the activities in motor skills, like reaching, rolling from back to stomach, attempting to secure some objects. It was found from the group discussion that initiation of breast feeding was delayed for 4-6 hours. Failing of items in motor domain, might be due to poor nutritional status of infants and lack of early stimulation by mothers. It was observed that children were left in cradle ideally when mothers were at work. Playful movements would be limited when children were placed in cradles made with cloth for a longer time. Babies who spend a lot of time in equipment like cradles which keeps babies in stationery may actually impede their development (Abbott and Barlett, 2001). Poor stimulating environment and resources would lead to delayed motor skills. Positioning of babies properly for play will improve their motor abilities. Some parents place their infants on their backs during waking period as well. A study by Pin *et al.* (2007) found that an infant who spend more on waking hours on their backs may develop motor delays.

From the study it was found that infants of three months of age, performed well on mental domain as on motor domain. They were aware of strange situations, they expressed different behaviours when others tried to carry them and when they were given to others, they tried to withdraw and clinged to their mothers. Only few children (25%) failed to perform activities in three months of age. It showed that development of mental skills by the end of three months were at slower pace and in declining trend till the end of fifth month. Majority of children (88%) exhibited poor eye hand co-ordination. As per the developmental norms at the age of four or five months, eye hand co-ordination would develop sufficiently for an infant to manipulate toys and children would begin to seek them out. More than fifty per cent of children failed to reach for cube, failed in exploitive paper play, this could be due to the poor eye hand co-ordination and difficulty in manipulating the things. Manipulation of objects was poor as these infant were delayed in motor co-ordination, active exploration during play was not seen, because it was observed that infants could not lift head and visually explore the space.

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