



“Hands-on” evaluation of an infant

M Maldonado MD



Age differences

- Premature infant
- Newborn
- First three months of life
- 3-12 months of life
- Second year of life
- Third year of life



Different “developmental lines” in each child

- Maintenance of “states” of alertness
- Degree of overall organization
- State of self-regulation and control
- Gross motor functioning
- Fine Motor functioning
- Perceptual abilities: visual, auditory, tactile, proprioceptive, etc.

Different “developmental lines” in each child

- Communicational abilities
 - Receptive language
 - Expressive language
 - Language functioning



Different developmental lines in each child

- Interpersonal processing device
- Eye contact
- Ability to scan faces
- Deriving meaning from faces and gaze



Different developmental lines in each child

- Emotional State
- Range of emotions
- Overall mood perceived
- Ability to experience pleasure and smile
- Ability to empathize and react to situations

Different developmental lines in each child

- Ability to play
- Development of play abilities
- From self-play
- To symbolic play
- To representational play



PREMATURE INFANT

- Primary task. Regulation of states
- Ability to maintain a state of alertness
- Reactivity to stimuli surrounding
- Tendency to be overwhelmed and not respond “hospitalitis”?
- Ability to suck



Premature infant

- Physiological and state regulation are paramount
- Regulation of temperature, variations with experiences
- Ability to be content and alert
- Need of rest and “buffer” in order to protect brain development



Newborn infant

- Transition from aquatic existence to a terrestrial one
- Multiple physiological adjustments
- Responsiveness depends on “state”
- Physiological regulation is highly responsive to environmental cues



Newborn States

- Deep Sleep
- REM sleep
- Drowsiness
- Quiet alert
- Active alert
- Crying



Newborn responsiveness

- Neonatal Behavioral Assessment
- (Brazelton)
- Newborn preferences for certain stimuli
- Animated stimuli are preferred over inanimate ones
- “brightening response”



Newborn responsiveness

- Turns to the sound of a bell
- Gets “habituated” to repeated stimuli
- Prefers the voice of familiar people, e.g. mother
- Strategy to scan faces (eyes, hair contour, distance from eyebrows to hair line)



Newborn behavior

- “Primitive reflexes” predominate
- Plantar reflex
- Palmar reflex
- Moro reflex
- “taking steps”
- Swimming reflex
- Rooting and sucking reflexes



Newborn behavior

- Quality of movement
- Tremulousness
- Pursues objects with head and eyes
- Easily startled
- Signs of aversiveness (hiccups, turning away, closing eyes, sneezing, etc.)



First year of life. Some important markers

- Smile during REM sleep
- Social smile appears at about 2 months or earlier
- Child pursues objects since birth, with a “delayed” pursuit
- Child is responsive to stimulation
- Baby shows preferences for some stimuli



First year of life. Some important markers

- Baby has “cooing” conversations in at about three months of age
- Improve control of movements, they are smoother and finer
- “fidgety” movements at about 4 to 6 months with fingers
- Head control starts at about 2-3 months
- 5 months starts reaching for objects



First year of life. Some important markers

- Before six months infant smiles at everyone
- Cautiousness with strangers at about 6 to 9 months
- Later on Stranger Anxiety
- Signs of “attachment” behavior after six months (exclusive relationship)



First year of life. Some important markers

- Increased signs of autonomy around 10 months
- Pincer grasp (motor) at about 9 months or so
- Sitting at about six months
- Crawling at 8 or 9 months
- Starts standing up holding on to things




First year of life. Some important markers

- “canonical babbling” at about 9 months
- Then starts saying two syllables together, like mama, baba, etc.
- First words at around first year of life
- Starts showing shared attention at about 10 months of age



Second year of life. Some important markers

- Firmly established walking and go on to running
- Pencil grasp is pronate (whole hand)
- “pretends” to be sweeping, cooking, etc. imitating adults around him
- Shows cautiousness with novel stimuli



Second year of life. Some important markers

- Starts giving steps after one year (balance issue)
- Signs of staying close to mother or “rapprochement”
- “social referencing” to the face of the mother or caregiver when in an uncertain situation (12-13 months)
- Exploring vs. secure base behavior



Second year of life

- Increased “ autonomy” and wanting to do things by him or herself
- “explosion” of vocabulary
- Imitates words and sounds
- Imitates what others are doing
- Symbolization in play appears after 12 months or so
- (an objects stands for another)



Third year of life (24 to 36 mo)

- After 2nd birthday more “phrases” of two word syllables
- Has started to say “no” and now he/she “means it”.
- Trying to do more things,
- Play: exploring, learning, experimenting, sheer pleasure



Third year of life (24 to 36 mo)

- Tests boundaries and limits
- Asserts authority
- Frustrated and may have temper outbursts
- Increased motor skills
- Pronate grasp of pencil
- Can trace a line



Third year of life (24 to 36 mo)

- Steps up and steps down, one at a time
- Expanded vocabulary and phrases
- Initial “conversations” closes some circles of communication, one sentence at a time
- Interested in imitation and longer sequences



Third year of life (24 to 36 mo)

- Parallel play with other children
- Can engage in increasing symbolic play and pretence
- Self-referred play moves to make believe
- Shows creativity, play scenes from everyday life
- Fears of monsters, etc.



Third year of life (24 to 36 mo)

- Overall in a happy mood
- Can get very angry or very sad and tends to recover quickly
- Reactive to changes in environment
- Reactive to emotional field and context
- Becomes a “partner” (goal corrected partnership)