

How do children with global developmental delay compare with children with language delay?

childhood
disability
LINK



Summary

Developmental delay: A diagnosis for a child who is delayed in the achievement in one or more developmental milestones.

Global developmental delay: A diagnosis for a child who is delayed in the achievement of many developmental milestones (in 2 or more developmental domains).

Language delay: A language delay is diagnosed when language development that is significantly below the norm for a child of a specified age.

The objective of this study was to compare and contrast developmental and functional outcomes at early school age between two cohorts of children diagnosed early in life with either a global developmental delay or developmental language impairment. Outcome was assessed approximately four years after initial diagnosis utilizing the Battelle Developmental Inventory and the Vineland Adapted Behavior Scale. In both cohorts of children performance on either measure in all domains was below that of age-matched peers. The children originally diagnosed with a global developmental delay performed consistently more poorly than those children originally diagnosed with a developmental language impairment. The only exception to this was performance on the language subdomain of the Battelle Developmental Inventory. The majority of children had subscale scores that fell below clinically meaningful cutoffs on the outcome measures, especially for those initially diagnosed with a global developmental delay. The diagnostic construct of either a global developmental delay or developmental language impairment has later predictive value in terms of persisting developmental and functional deficits several years after initial diagnosis.

What families should know

Accurate diagnosis of a developmental delay early in life has later implications with regards to outcomes. These children with global delay or developmental cognitive impairment are likely to exhibit ongoing delays across domains at school age.

What practitioners should know

These children should be followed systematically at key intervals in their development to identify new developmental concerns that warrant interventions.

Reference

[Shevell, M., Majnemer, A., Platt, R., Webster, R., & Birnbaum, R. \(2005\). Developmental and functional outcomes in children with global developmental delay or developmental language impairment. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, 47, 678-683.](#)