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ARTICLE

Title: Global developmental delay and its homoeopathic management

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ABSTRACT

Global developmental delay (GDD) involves significant delays in achieving milestones in motor skills, speech, cognition, social interactions, and daily activities. Diagnosed in children under five years old, GDD requires delays in at least two areas and is classified by severity as mild, moderate, or severe. Effective management demands a personalized approach addressing both mental and physical development. Tailored interventions, such as assistive technology, counseling, therapy, and educational programs, enhance development. Homoeopathic remedies offer a holistic approach, addressing delays while considering each child's unique needs, significantly improving their developmental progress and well-being.

Keywords:

Delayed milestones, Global Developmental Delay, GDD, Homoeopathy

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INTRODUCTION

Development is a multifaceted process during which individuals gain the skills required for effective functioning in social environments... This journey begins in childhood and continues throughout life, with the majority of developmental milestones occurring within the first few years.^[1] Global developmental delay is the significant delay in achieving developmental milestones at the expected age. Developmental milestones include Gross/Fine motor skills, Speech/Language, Cognition, Social/personal, and Daily life activities.^[2] Developmental delay can be in single domain (isolated developmental delay) or multiple areas.^[3] When the child under the age of 5 years is significantly behind in at least two or more areas of milestone development then it is considered a global developmental delay.^[4] However, in practice, GDD term is used when the child has both motor delay and a delay in at least two other areas of developmental performance.^[5] The degree of developmental delay is further classified as mild (functional age < 33% chronological age), moderate (functional age 34% -66% of chronological age), and severe (functional age < 66% of chronological age).^[6]

Other developmental issues:^[3]

Developmental Disorders: Development deviates from the normal pattern. For example, a child with autism may develop language abilities but struggle to use them for

social interaction and communication.

Developmental Arrest and Regression: After a period of normal development, a child fails to acquire new skills or loses previously acquired skills. Regression is a critical warning sign that requires urgent specialist

further

evaluation

and

management.

for

referral

Developmental Disability: This involves severe, lifelong impairments in areas such as learning, self-sufficiency, and adaptive skills. Not all children with developmental delay will have a developmental disability.

Transient vs. Persistent Delays: Developmental delays can be temporary, occurring during periods of prolonged illness, or persistent, indicating a more ongoing issue.

The DSM-5 specifies the following about global developmental delay (GDD) [7-8]:

- 1. **Classification**: GDD is identified as a neurodevelopmental disorder.
- 2. Diagnostic Criteria:
 - o **Significant Delays**: The DSM-5 emphasizes that GDD involves substantial developmental delays, defined as performance at least two standard deviations below the mean on standardized developmental tests.
 - Differentiation: This criterion serves to distinguish GDD from milder or isolated delays in specific

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developmental domains.

3. Age Consideration:

o Diagnosis for Young Children: GDD is a diagnosis reserved for children under the age of 5 years.

Transition to Intellectual Disability: For individuals over 5 years old exhibiting similar extensive deficits in adaptive and intellectual functioning, the diagnosis changes intellectual disability

Table 1: Prevalence of Global Developmental Delay

CATEGORY	PREVALENCE	
Overall development disability	Estimated 5-10% of all children have some form of developmental issue [9]	
Delayed milestones in children < 5 years	With a prevalence rate of 1-3% globally, GDD is one of the most common problem found in pediatrics. [6]	
Prevalence by country:		
• India	 The prevalence of developmental delay is 7.9% among rural children under the age of two ^[10] Studies have reported a range of prevalence for developmental delay from 1.5% to 19.8% ^[11-12] 	
 Turkey 	6.4% prevalence rate [13]	
 Nepal 	56.4 % prevalence rate ^[14]	
• Iran	8.6% prevalence rate [15]	
Gender differences Boys have an estimated 30% higher incidence of a developmental delay compared to girls (gap narrows with age		

ETIOLOGY:

Conditions which may lead to developmental delayed are:

Table 2: Etiology of Global Developmental Delay^[17-23]

GENETIC CAUSES: ACOUIRED CAUSES: > Perinatal causes: • Metabolic disorders Exposure to teratogens or toxins Down syndrome (trisomy 21) (tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs) Cerebral dysgenesis Hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy Fragile X syndrome (FMR1 gene, CGG Prematurity triplet repeat expansion, X- linked inheritance). Birth trauma Rett syndrome (MECP2 gene mutation) Encephalopathy/meningitis/encephalitis 22q11 deletion syndrome i.e. DiGeorge sequelae syndrome and velocardiofacial syndrome. Postnatal causes-Hypothyroidism Neurocutaneous syndromes i.e. neurofibromatosis Brain tumor type 1, tuberous sclerosis etc. Infantile tremor syndrome Nutritional deficiencies such as iodine, vitamin B12, thiamine deficiency Toxins like lead poisoning

A study by Gupta S, Shrivastava P, and colleagues found that factors such as the mother's education, family socioeconomic status, parity, child gender, and birth weight are significantly linked to developmental delay. In contrast, gestational duration, maternal age at delivery, and mode of delivery were not significantly associated with developmental delay. [24]

Significant Missed Milestones Warranting Intervention: [25]

Table 3: Important Developmental Red Flags Requiring Intervention

AGE	MISSED MILESTONES DE INTERVENTION	MANDING		
2 months	-Absence of visual fixation			
2 months	- No social smiling			
4-6 months	- Inability to track objects			
	- Lack of head control			
	- No response to sound or voice			
6 months	- Reduced vocalizations			
9-12 months	- Unable to sit unaided			
18 months	- Difficulty walking independently			
	- No shared attention with caregiver			
24 months	- Absence of single words	- Absence of single words		
36 months	- No use of three-word sentences			
	- Difficulty following simple instructions			
>3 years	- Speech not intelligible			
	- Dependence on gestures for communication			

GUIDELINES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE GDD [26]:

Global Developmental Delay (GDD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that occurs with considerable frequency. Due to the limited amount of published research and the lack of standardized guidelines, the Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) established seven subcommittees comprising experts in the field. These subcommittees reviewed the available literature, identified key issues, and developed guidelines after multiple rounds of discussion. The finalized guidelines were subsequently approved by the IAP's executive board.

GUIDELINES:

Table 4: Guidelines for Diagnosis and management of the GDD

1.	DEFINITION AND SEVERITY OF GDD	
1A.	Definition	• Significant delay (≥ 2 SD below mean) in ≥ 2
		developmental domains (gross/fine motor,
		speech/language, cognition, social/personal,
		activities of daily life) in < 5yo.
		• Exclusion criteria: if delay in two or more
		domains are primarily due to motor or severe
		uncorrected visual or hearing impairments.

1B.	In the case of GDD and coexistent Psychosocial	Provide stimulation, reassess after 6-9 months before GDD diagnosis.
	Deprivation	
1C.	Severity	Mild, with a standard quotient (SQ) ranging from
		55 to 70; Moderate, with an SQ between 36 and 54;
		Severe, with an SQ from 21 to 35; and Profound,
		with an SQ below 20.
2.		AL SURVEILLANCE AND SCREENING
2A.	Surveillance	Regular developmental monitoring should continue
		until age 2, conducted during immunization visits and employing milestone questions appropriate for
		the child's age.
2B.	Screening	Developmental screening with standardized tools is
25.	Sercening	advised at 9 to 12 months, 18 to 24 months, and
		again when the child begins school.
2C.	Screening for high risk	Monitoring and screening are recommended at the
	infants	following intervals: between 4 to 6 months, 9 to 12
		months, 18 to 24 months, and then annually until
		the child reaches 5 years old, with an additional
		screening upon entering school.
2D.	Autism spectrum	For Children diagnosed with GDD; At 18-24month
	disorder Screening	(as per ASD screening guidelines), if negative, re-
2	CI	screen at 3 year of age.
3. 3A.		A thorough evaluation should include a detailed
JA.	Assessment	A thorough evaluation should include a detailed history, a clinical examination to assess
		developmental delay, and an investigation into
		potential etiological factors and any comorbidities.
3B.	Diagnosis	A definitive diagnosis of GDD should be
		established using standardized developmental
		assessment tests.
4.		INVESTIGATIONS
4A.	History and	Investigations should be directed by a
	examination	comprehensive history and thorough examination
		in order to design focused and relevant tests.
4B.	Vision/Hearing	Screening recommended before developmental
40	screening	tests in all cases.
4C.	Neuroimaging	MRI/MRS preferred if specific clinical indicators present.
4D.	EEG	Only for children with suspected epilepsy/epileptic
		syndromes
4E.	Biochemical/Metabolic	To identify treatable condition causing GDD
4E.1	Thyroid Function test	Evaluate all children with global developmental
		delay, particularly if newborn screening results are
		unavailable. For high-risk or symptomatic children,
		such as those with Down syndrome, repeat
477.0	Division Division	evaluations regularly.
4E.2	Biotinidase Deficiency	Rule out, especially if no newborn screening
		performed

4E.3	Iron and B12	Consider even in the absence of other indicative
	Deficiency	signs.
4E.4	Lead Levels	Advised in situations where there is a risk of
		environmental exposure.
4E.5	Creatinine	Suggested for young boys with unexplained global
	Phosphokinase (CPK)	developmental delay.
4F.	Genetic Tests	If clinical suspicion of a genetic disorder or unclear
		etiology.
5.		MANAGEMENT
5A.	Early intervention	Neurodevelopmentally supportive care should be
	strategies for newborns	initiated in the NICU for infants who are at risk of
	identified as high-risk.	developmental delay.
5B.	Management of	Potentially treatable causes of global
	treatable causes	developmental delay should be identified and
		specific treatments initiated as early as possible.
5C.	Routine Health Care	Children with developmental delay should receive
		consistent health care interventions at every level
		of care.
5D.	Early developmental	Start intervention promptly upon recognizing a
	interventions	delay, even before a formal diagnosis is made.
5E.	Co-morbidity Screening	Behavioral issues, epilepsy, CP, visual and hearing
		impairments, sleep disturbances; refer as needed.
5F.	Co-morbid Febrile	An EEG is indicated when there is a family history
	Seizures	of epilepsy and/or complex febrile seizures.
		Prophylactic measures should be considered if risk
		factors are present.
5G.	Pre-school Education	Children with global developmental delay should
	services	be provided with preschool education services in
		the least restrictive environment that is suitable for
		addressing their needs.
6.		COUNSELLING
6A.	Counseling	Offer comprehensive family counseling at
		diagnosis and as new etiological info becomes
		available.
7.		SNOSIS AND FOLLOW-UP
7A.	Follow-Up	Consistent follow-up should address all domains
		and comorbidities; specialist consultation may be
		considered as needed

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS: [25]

Screening is a crucial, momentary assessment procedure that helps identify children needing more intensive analysis or assessment. Various developmental screening charts and parent-completed questionnaires, like the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status, are used for this purpose. An ideal screening tool should be reliable, simple, easy to

administer, time-efficient, cost-effective, and culturally relevant. Developmental assessment tools include the Developmental Observation Card by SAT Hospital, the Child Development Centre Grading for Motor Milestones, and the Trivandrum Developmental Screening Chart. The Infants Developmental Assessment Scale (IDAS), based on the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, and the Developmental

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Assessment Scale for Indian Infants (DASII) evaluate mental and motor development. Other tools. such as the Baroda Developmental Screening Test (BDST). Denver Developmental Screening Test II, and Clinical Adaptive Test and Clinical Linguistic Auditory and Milestone Scale various (CAT/CLAMS), assess developmental aspects. The Good Enough-Harris Drawing Test, a nonverbal intelligence the Thiruvananthapuram Developmental Screening Chart, designed for large-scale community use, are also valuable in assessing developmental progress in children.

MANAGEMENT

The management of developmental delay in children requires a personalized approach that addresses both mental and physical aspects of their development. However, it's essential to recognize that each child is unique, developing in their own way and at their own pace. Effective management involves tailored interventions that consider individual strengths and weaknesses. A range of support services—including assistive technology, audiology, counseling, nursing, nutritional services, educational programs, occupational and physical therapy, as well as speech and linguistic therapy—provides comprehensive support to enhance child development and meet their specific needs.^[27]

HOMOEOPATHIC MANAGEMENT [27-32]

Homoeopathic remedies selected based on constitutional symptoms plays a significant role in overcoming developmental delays and supporting normal growth. Medicines for delayed development: -

1. Aethusa cynapium

Aethusa cynapium is often used for developmental delays in infants, particularly those struggling with head control. This remedy is indicated for children who exhibit extreme restlessness, excessive crying, and a significant intolerance to milk. Infants may

experience symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, and overall weakness, which can lead to drowsiness and exhaustion. It is particularly useful when milk consumption results in violent vomiting of curdled milk and a yellow fluid, accompanied by a state of prostration and sleepiness. It is frequently recommended during periods of dentition or summer complaints when digestive issues and poor circulation are prominent.

2. Agaricus muscarius

Agaricus muscarius is an effective remedy for children who exhibit delays in walking, talking, and learning. These children often have a slow mental development, leading to mistakes in speaking and writing as they grow older. They possess a very poor memory and are slow to comprehend new information, making them highly dependent on their parents. This remedy is particularly useful for addressing these developmental delays and helping to support overall cognitive and physical growth.

3. Baryta carbonica

Baryta carbonica is a key remedy for children experiencing both mental and physical dwarfism. characterized by significant developmental delays. These children often appear dull-minded and slow to learn essential skills such as walking and talking. Baryta carbonica is particularly indicated for children who are excessively shy, fearful of strangers, and exhibit retarded development following trauma or vaccination. They may display extreme timidity, hiding behind their mother and avoiding play or social interactions. Such children often suffer from poor concentration, delayed milestones, and a tendency toward passive behavioral abnormalities, including unresponsiveness and stubbornness. Their development is frequently marked by a fear of change and insecurity, contributing to difficulties in adapting to new situations and tasks.

Baryta carbonica is especially suited for children who demonstrate a pronounced fear of people and frequent night terrors, coupled with a tendency to easily become irritated and sick.

4. Calcarea carbonica

Calcarea carbonica is a pivotal remedy for children exhibiting symptoms of calcium and phosphate metabolism deficiencies, leading to impaired bone development and structural abnormalities. These children often have a flabby fair, and constitution, characterized by a large head, big abdomen, and pale, chalky skin. They are typically sluggish, dull, and lethargic, with delayed milestones such as walking and dentition. A notable feature is delayed closure of fontanelles, particularly the anterior one. The remedy is also indicated for children who sweat excessively on the scalp, neck, and chest, often wetting their pillow while sleeping. Additional symptoms may include soft, rickety bones prone to fractures, curved legs, and a tendency toward obesity. Children may also show a craving for eggs and aversion to milk and meat, alongside unusual desires for indigestible substances. Calcarea carbonica is well-suited for those with slow development in both mental and physical aspects, presenting with slow ossification, curved spine, and grinding of teeth.

5. Calcarea phosphorica

Calcarea phosphorica is highly effective for delicate, thin, and emaciated children who exhibit notably slow progress in both physical and mental development. These children often experience delays in learning to walk and talk, with slow tooth development and a posterior fontanelle that may remain open longer than usual. Their skulls can be soft, thin, and brittle, reflecting a broader issue of impaired growth and cell repair. Calcarea phosphorica is indicated in cases of deficient assimilation and poor nutrition, leading to delayed development, brittle bones, nonunion of bones and poor memory. It is also useful for addressing general weakness resulting from inadequate nutrition.

6. Carcinosin

Carcinosin is a valuable remedy for children experiencing arrested growth developmental delays, particularly those with very low immunity who are prone to recurrent severe infections. It is effective in addressing difficulties with falling asleep, especially in children who need to be carried, rocked, or sleep on their abdomen. Carcinosin is also indicated for children with autism and developmental delays who exhibit marked hyperactivity and restless behavior. The remedy is believed to positively influence cases with a history of carcinoma or symptoms indicative of the disease. Children who benefit from Carcinosin may display a bluish tinge to the sclera, a brownish cafe-aulait complexion, numerous pigmented moles, and may exhibit blinking eyes or unusual tics. They often prefer to sleep in the knee-elbow position, which can be another key indicator for this remedy.

7. Natrium muriaticum

Natrium muriaticum is particularly suited for children who are emotionally reserved and exhibit a delayed development in speech and walking. These children often make mistakes when speaking and struggle with heavy and difficult speech. They have a strong need for affection, and when this need is unmet, they can be significantly emotionally affected, contributing to their late talking. Physically, they may have weak ankles that turn easily, causing delays in learning to walk. Additionally, these children may experience significant emaciation, losing weight despite eating well, with rapid weight loss in the throat and neck during summer. They are highly susceptible to colds and display marked irritability, often becoming cross when spoken to, crying easily, and getting into passions over trifles, especially when consoled.

8. Silicea

Silicea is a highly effective remedy for developmental delays, particularly in children with a large head and thin legs. These children often exhibit slow closure of sutures and fontanelles, along with emaciation and defective assimilation. They may have a distended abdomen, delays in learning to talk and walk, and are prone to worm infestations. Due to imperfect assimilation and consequent defective nutrition, these children often appear cold and chilly, seeking warmth and avoiding drafts. They tend to have cold hands and feet and their symptoms worsen in winter. Silicea helps to address these issues by supporting proper growth and development.

9. **Tubercullinum**

Tuberculinum is an effective remedy for children who are weak, emaciated, and deficient due mentally to retarded development. children These typically experience delays in learning to speak and may exhibit excessive sweating, particularly at night. Symptoms include rapid emaciation, prolonged diarrhea, extreme wasting, bluish pallor, and exhaustion. Tuberculinum is also useful for addressing mental deficiencies, enlarged tonsils, and cold, clammy sweat on the upper parts of the body and hands. A distinctive symptom is shivering when beginning to sleep, along with cold feet in bed, which is common among those with low vital reaction. This remedy helps support overall growth and development while managing these specific symptoms.

CONCLUSION

The management of developmental delay in children requires a personalized approach that addresses both mental and physical aspects of development. Each child develops uniquely, so tailored interventions that consider individual strengths and weaknesses are crucial. Support services like assistive technology, counseling, therapy, and educational programs enhance development. Homoeopathic remedies offer a holistic approach, addressing both physical and mental delays while considering each child's

constitutional needs. Through individualized treatment plans, homoeopathy can significantly improve the developmental progress and overall well-being of children with developmental delays.

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