Introduction

Challenging Cases from the
Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics

SUPPLEMENT TO PEDIATRICS

The developmental model has always informed our understanding of the behaviors of children and adolescents. From its earliest stage as a medical specialty, the practice of pediatrics recognized the significance of developmental change in neurological and behavioral domains. However, until about thirty years ago, with a few notable exceptions, our knowledge base and sources of teaching in this important area of practice were dependent on child psychiatrists and psychologists. From these disciplines we learned, and continue to learn, about children and adolescents.

With the emergence of the field of developmental and behavioral pediatrics, our understanding of children and families now focuses more specifically on the challenges we experience in pediatric practice as we care for children during health supervision visits and at times of illness both in the office and the hospital. Clinical studies that focus on developmental or behavioral problems common to office-based pediatric practice are now published frequently in Pediatrics and other peer review journals. Pediatricians can find approaches to common and uncommon behavioral and developmental problems in several textbooks written from the perspective of pediatrics. Increasing numbers of CME courses and workshops in the past decade offer practical guidance.

To further enhance the education of pediatricians, the editors of the Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics initiated a special section on “challenging cases” 6 years ago. Cases are selected from primary care pediatrician’s point of view and are presented in a brief format. Two or three discussants, usually from different disciplines, develop an approach to the problem from the perspective of a primary care clinician. The focus for each discussion is on data collection, a diagnostic framework, and initial management strategies. The emphasis of each Challenging Cases is on 1.) establishing a diagnosis in order to provide pediatricians with a practical set of tools to guide families and assist them with the many problems in development and behavior that impact a child’s growth, and 2.) the ability to recognize a developmental variation from a condition that may require an active intervention. In addition, recognition of time limitations in primary care practice guides each discussion.

I am grateful to Dr. Stanford Friedman, past editor of the journal, who recognized the importance of case studies in order to assist practicing pediatricians in their ability to embrace behavior and development as an important part of practice. I have made use of cases from my own practice as well as cases presented to me by residents and students at the University of California San Diego. Colleagues at other institutions contributed a few of the cases. I am grateful to the many contributors to the case discussions who were guided by the principles of clinical scholarship and a practical application to primary care pediatrics. Recently, the cases have been available on the web for comment prior to publication.* I have incorporated some of those comments into the articles.

A single case study can be a rich source of learning. As a teaching format, it is in common use during hospital rounds and small group seminars. It is less often seen in medical journals as an important method of learning. The challenging cases in child and adolescent development and behavior provide a source of education that may be difficult to acquire from standard textbooks. Although the spectrum of problems do not include all behaviors and developmental conditions, discussions lay the foundation for a variety of clinical approaches that can be used in different situations. Written for primary care clinicians, these case studies represent actual clinical situations and are intended to furnish the reader with the knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm that will enhance effective care for children and families in their practice.

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*The case summary for the Challenging Case is posted on the Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics web site (http://www.dbpeds.org/list) and the website of the the Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics (http://www.lww.com/DBP.)
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