Epidemiological Study of Developmental Progress in Vulnerable Oklahoma Families

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**Background:**

Early detection of childhood developmental disorders and child abuse potential offer parents many benefits. Early detection gives parents the abilities to build upon the strengths their child already has while improving areas of weakness. Early intervention provides better opportunities for success. When child abuse potential is detected, parents can receive help through one of the home-based parenting programs available in Oklahoma.

**Methods:**

This research is part of an evaluation of Oklahoma home-visiting programs. Participants are recruited based on eligibility for these programs. Using a longitudinal survey, vulnerable families in four Oklahoma counties answer questions about their youngest child regarding developmental delays using the following screening instruments:

* Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (MCHAT)
* Autism Spectrum Rating Scales (ASRS)
* Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales (CSBS)
* Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory (BCAP)
* select sexual behavior questions from the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
* Ages and Stages 3 Questionairre (ASQ-3)

**Results:**

With 1204 initial surveys completed, 17% of the eligible participants (n=240) were classified “at risk” on the MCHAT compared to 7% nationally. The ASRS (n=180) had 26% in the “very elevated risk” category. Scores in this risk level are in the 98th percentile nationally. The CSBS identified 18% “at risk” (n=658) with males having a higher percentage than females (57% vs 43%). Scores in this risk category are in the 10th percentile nationally (s=1.25).

The BCAP child abuse scale indicated that 29% fell into the “at risk” category (n=568).

The CBCL questions had responses ranging from 0% to 4% with no significant difference from the national norms.

The ASQ-3 has 5 subsections for multiple ages. The “at risk” percentages from the survey are as follows:

* Communication: 22%
* Gross Motor Skills: 11%
* Fine Motor Skills: 20%
* Problem Solving: 12%
* Personal-Social: 13%

The ASQ-3 cut-off scores are 2 standard deviations below the national mean with more extreme scores having a potential for developmental disorders and further assessment is recommended. The cut-offs imply that 2.5% of the population will score in the at-risk category.

**Conclusions:**

The results from our survey have shown that for all developmental markers, our participants score in the at-risk categories at a higher rate than the national norms.