What is Pediatric HIV?

• The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) affects 2.6 million children below the age of 15 years worldwide
• In the U.S., roughly 200 children are born with HIV each year
• Without early detection and proper medical treatment, HIV can become Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

How is HIV transmitted?

• Transmission from infected mother to child
  o In utero
  o During birth
  o In early infancy via breast milk
• Blood transfusion
• Sexual assault

Possible Complications

• Cognitive impairments
• Motor impairments
• Speech impairments
• Voice disorders
• Feeding or swallowing disorders
• Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
• Frequent, severe bacterial infections that result in hospitalization
• Lung disease
• Impaired brain growth (encephalopathy)
  o Children with this condition are more likely to have cognitive, motor, and language disorders

Prevention

• Mother-to-child transmission is decreasing due to development of effective medication
• Mothers who are HIV positive should speak to their doctor about how to prevent transmission to their children

Resources for Parents and Families:
Pediatric AIDS Foundation: www.pedaids.org
Pediatric HIV and Communication

- Children with HIV may have:
  - Expressive (spoken) language impairments
  - Receptive language impairments (understanding language)
  - Hearing impairments
    - Up to 50% of children with HIV have hearing loss
  - Motor problems that may affect speech
- Unstable home environments or low socio-economic family status may decrease children’s access to services

Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- Work with an interdisciplinary team (pediatricians, physical therapists, educators, etc.) to address the needs of children with HIV and their families
- Advocate for early intervention
- Educate parents on expected developmental milestones
- Deliver evidence-based, individualized treatment
  - Feeding/swallowing treatment, language skills, phonological skills, preliteracy, literacy, etc.

Classroom Modifications

- Give clear and simple directions
- Incorporate language enrichment into activities throughout the day
- Make accommodations for learning outside of the classroom; children with HIV may be hospitalized frequently
- Work with physical therapist and occupational therapist to support child’s gross and fine motor needs

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