Book review

Enhancing early childhood development: A hand book for clinicians by Durriyah Sinno, Lama Charafeddine and Muhamad Mikati

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Written by Durriyah Sinno, Lama Charafeddine and Muhamad Mikati, with contributions by Rebecca L.Holt and Aravindhan Veerapandiyan, this book offers readers the different facets of child development and early interventions in a range of children. Whilst all the six chapters in the book deal with enhancing childhood development, each chapter focuses on children facing various health issues, ranging from cerebral palsy and autism to behavioural and psychological disorders. The chapters on enhancing childhood development in normal children and on nutrition for better development of all children is a useful resource for caregivers, teachers and parents of young children.

Throughout this book, the authors provide evidence that early childhood development intervention programmes (ECDI), result in enhanced cognitive as well as non cognitive development benefits for both children with medical conditions and normal children. In the first chapter, the authors discuss ways to stimulate the various domains of physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development for children from birth through to five years. The complexity of experiences to be provided to children in order to stimulate the developmental domains increases gradually with age. and this is depicted clearly, giving a range of specific examples of play and activities.

The second chapter explains the conditions of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and identifies issues in social development, routines, behaviours and self care skills in autistic children. It suggests strategies from the principles of "Daily life therapy" and the "Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)" to improve communication, imitation and self care skills among autistic children. In addition there are practical tips on eating, dressing, bathing and entertainment with ample examples to support all those concerned. The guidelines as to how to plan and execute each activity with the child will surely help caregivers to understand autistic children and scaffold their learning and development. There is also a part in the chapter that focuses on play with autistic children and examples of play, types of play and the selection of suitable toys. For each of the above sections, there are graphic illustrations, which are clear and greatly aid understanding.

Chapter three introduces the condition of cerebral palsy and explains the different types, analyses the causes, suggests actions to be taken upon the diagnosis of cerebral palsy and provides early intervention strategies to inform and guide concerned caregivers. A chart that gives clear guidelines on helping body positions during routine movements, coupled with the illustrations of the various body positions reinforces the ideas discussed. This chapter also throws light on the symptoms of other disorders affecting motor development, like the
Downs Syndrome, Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, Guillain Barie Syndrome, Poliomyelitis, and Stroke.

In chapter four, the authors highlight common behavioural and psychological problems that parents and caregivers may encounter in children at an early age. The checklist of the expected milestones in speech development in children is informative and useful to all concerned. Speech disorders like stuttering, delayed speech and behaviour problems, such as aggression, temper tantrums and picky eating, are also analysed, along with a list of what to do in the event of such behaviour.

While discussing psychological disorders, the authors elaborate on the condition of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and emphasise the need for parents to be educated and given guidance for life at home. Sinno et al. also discuss other disorders affecting children, like generalised anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder and post traumatic stress disorder.

A particular highlight and a 'must read' for all adults caring for children, in my opinion, is chapter five, which focuses on nutrition for the development of infants and children. Nutrition for children just born, up to the age of five years is discussed, taking into account the developmental milestones. A sample menu is given for the lactating mother, which is certainly useful to new mothers. A discussion on the feeding pattern for infants, diet for children suffering from epilepsy, constituents of a gluten free/high calorie/high protein diet, and omega-3 fatty acids are informative and add value to this chapter.

The last chapter summarises the manual developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF, which is designed for health providers and caregivers of children. This chapter offers many insights into the situations in which caregivers might work with health providers and how they can ably guide them. A range of strategies and practices are identified, by which health providers can analyse the interactions between children and caregivers and, as per requirement, guide the caregivers in identifying the traits of their children and any detect learning difficulties, if any.

*Enhancing Early Child Development – A Hand Book for Clinicians* is intended by the authors to be a resource for primary care providers, such as paediatricians and even specialists, but it has relevance as a reference book to parents/caregivers of children, early childhood teachers and to students across disciplines. The chapters on enhancing childhood development in normal children and on nutrition for better development of all children is a useful resource for caregivers, teachers and parents of young children. The layout and format of the book lends itself to easy access. The graphic representations included in some chapters complement the writing and help the readers understand the content. Most importantly, this book will be of interest to all readers who are keen to have fresh insights into various developmental issues relating to young children.
References