

PAEDIATRICS

Milestones of development

An understanding of the typical behaviour development is useful for eye care professionals when assessing children, Bill Harvey argues

Despite the great variety of environmental and genetic influences upon a child's development, certain patterns emerge as common to the majority of individuals within a large social group. These have been studied and observed by many famous researchers into childhood development, such as Piaget,¹ and form the basis of many guides to development which are used by clinicians involved with monitoring the development of infants.

DENVER DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING TEST

The Denver Developmental Screening Test² has long been used to show the main events expected at any specified age in a child's development.³ A thorough history and symptoms taking from a child may well touch on several of these key events and so an awareness of the normal patterns of development are useful for any clinician dealing with children. Table 1 gives a summary of the milestones or key events in the development of the child.

The Denver Test is a useful guideline and allows an eye care

practitioner dealing with very small children on a regular basis to have an idea as to the general level of expected function. The fuller version classifies the milestones into four categories:

- Gross motor
- Language
- Fine motor
- Personal-social

While the first three put constraint upon the actual examination techniques an optometrist may use on a young child, the fourth category of personal-social development is the one which puts the social and interactive skills of the practitioner most under the spotlight. It is, as already mentioned, a reason why some practitioners would rather avoid children. It is increasingly becoming recognised, however, in all paediatric disciplines, that a mastery of recognising and responding appropriately to personal and social development needs is as important as the objective clinical skills.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Bearing this in mind, some psychologists have looked for patterns in the development of personality traits, and table 2 summarises one such classification.⁴ Each personality milestone is described in terms of conflicting emotions, which, it might be proposed, drive the behaviour of the child at the time.●

REFERENCES

- 1 Piaget, J. The construction of reality in the child. (1954), Basic Books, New York.
- 2 Frankenberg, WK, Dodds, JB. Denver Developmental Screening Test. (1969). University of Colorado Medical Centre.
- 3 Ettinger, ER. Professional communications in eye care. (1993), Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford.
- 4 Erickson, EH. Childhood and society. (1963) Norton, New York.

TABLE 2 Milestones in personality development

Stage conflict	Age (years)	Personality trait
Trust/mistrust	0-1	Security, stability and trust required. New conditions create uncertainty and mistrust
Autonomy/shame	1-3	Striving to master physical environment, goals not yet attainable cause anxiety
Initiative/guilt	3-5	Having developed autonomy, makes efforts to join in and initiate activities with others. Conflicts with others cause frustration
Industry/inferiority	5-11	Needs to meet demands of home and school
Identity/role confusion	11-18	Developing sense of identity, blending various roles into a cogent self-image

TABLE 1 A summary of key milestones of development first outlined in the Denver Developmental Screening Test

Months (unless specified)	Developmental Event
2	Laughs, smiles spontaneously
3	Rolls over
3.5	Reaches for object
4	Cooing, gurgling noises
5.5	Sits without support, turns to voices
6	Stands holding on Plays 'peek-a-boo' Good visual tracking and convergence
6-9	Babbles and imitates common sounds
8-9	Anxious in presence of unfamiliar individuals, distress at separation from mother figure (which may continue until around 20 months)
8-10	Creeps and crawls
9-10	Pulls self up to stand
9.5-10	Walks supported
10	Walks unsupported in short bursts, says 'mama' or 'papa'
11.5	Stands steadily
12	Walks
13	Says a few more words
17	Tackles stairs
20	Two-word sequences possible
2 years	Three-word sentences attempted, first sign of handedness which is fully established by 4.5-5 years
2.75 years	Repeats first and last names
7 years	Knows left/right on self
9 years	Knows left/right on others