

The Developmental Pediatric Consultation: Why it May Benefit Your Child or Teen

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Many families are struggling with figuring out how to help their children with complicated learning, developmental, social-emotional or behavioral difficulties. Often families would like to be able to discuss their children's struggles with a knowledgeable professional. Pediatricians typically see between 40-60 patients a day in hectic frenetically paced offices where parents are sometimes unable to receive the guidance and thorough evaluations they want and need. Under these circumstances, it is easy for a family to feel lost.

A further problem is the fragmentation of care. In the ideal situation, Pediatricians, Specialists, Teachers and caregivers would be communicating with each other. In today's fast paced world of managed care and dropping reimbursement for medical professionals this type of communication is time consuming, not reimbursed, and hard to achieve.

Having seen a professional for a problem does not mean that problem has been addressed sufficiently. Parents can be more confused at the end of a visit with a Specialist. Families are not simply looking for labels and diagnoses for their children. On their own, such practices can be more destructive to the child and the family. Understanding and coping with a child's problems requires more than a diagnosis. In fact the diagnosing is the least of it. Parents need and want to know what next? What do they do now? What are the best interventions to help their child? What are the long term implications? Are there other diagnoses? And what does the diagnosis really mean? Does their child need other tests? Specialists? Medication? A special school? The list is long. Parents are capable of tackling the issues. Who is more motivated to act in the best interests of a child than a well-informed parent? However on this journey a well-informed professional guide is invaluable.

Sometimes parents suffer from information overload with a special needs child. Armed with notebooks full of evaluations and treatment plans they need to synthesize and interpret all the information. This type of analysis can reveal inconsistencies and sometimes lead to new conclusions. Remember children are constantly growing and changing. Their problems are developmental because of the dramatic physical and psychological changes normally occurring throughout childhood. On the bright side a problem at age 6, can be an asset at age 16. This can be a source of joy and satisfaction in working with children and their families. Change is the rule not the exception and with change can come hope and understanding.

Some families suffer from significant omissions in their child's medical file. Information that is not sufficiently analyzed or thorough can be misleading. There can be underlying emotional, behavioral, or even medical issues that are overlooked. It is important to know when further diagnostic testing is appropriate, or specific recommendations for

therapies, educational interventions or other programs are needed. This is often lacking in the current medical system. A parent can become their own best expert. It may seem overwhelming or impossible at first, but with guidance this is a realistic achievable goal.

My personal contribution to my profession and community is to offer parents a place where children with a wide variety of problems including: ADHD, genetic syndromes, learning disabilities, autism and atypical children without diagnoses can receive guidance and support to determine the best course of action for the family and the child. By working closely with other professionals we can achieve the goal of the best possible care for each child and family.