Patient education initiatives to help outsmart developmental delays

In-office initiatives make a difference. Enhance your patient success by providing holistic education materials to support development and vision.

Abstract

In response to the recent increase in the incidence of autism, attention deficits, and learning difficulties among children, many public school systems now staff therapeutic practitioners to ensure an adequate education for these struggling children. However, research shows that many of these delays and conditions may be related to early health issues such as autoimmune conditions, food allergies, asthma, and ear infections. Research also suggests that many of these conditions are preventable.

The power to outsmart developmental delays lies in family education initiatives that bring controllable factors such as diet and movement opportunities to the attention of parents. Providing parents with up-to-date information and research encourages them to become proactive in preventing struggle for their children. This poster features an in-office initiative using a Wellness Bulletin Board that features information in the ways in which preconception health, pregnancy, and birth all impact development.

Choices about our environment, food supply and lifestyle can be identifiable risks that contribute to many pediatric delays. Prior to having a baby, women can preserve their fertility by living a healthy, toxin free lifestyle. Choosing non toxic products prior to pregnancy incurs benefits to the future child via a reduction in the level of toxins passed to the baby during gestation. A lower body burden of toxins supports a baby’s developing nervous system and creates a child who is less likely to experience delay and disease. For this reason, avoidance of environmental chemicals and toxins in the years prior to and during pregnancy is essential to the development of healthy children. Many of the toxins and chemicals in our environment today were unknown 20-30 years ago. Some of these chemicals and toxins act as hormone disruptors, which at high levels can lead to widespread dysfunction throughout the body.

Encouraging patient awareness about these toxins can result in limiting exposure, therefore, creating an opportunity to outsmart delays and disorders. In addition to addressing environmental exposures to chemicals, educating patients on the importance of all types of movement for infants and toddlers, including vestibular activities, early on is essential. Encouraging development through movement and other sensory input also precipitates the avoidance of the delays and disorders that involve deficits in body awareness and coordination.

Wellness Board Topics Relevant to Vision Therapy

- Household Cleaning Products
- Hormone Disruptors in Plastics
- Soda Ingredients and Alternatives
- Start the day with Meaningful Moves®
- Effects of Lunch on School Performance
- Healthy Snacking Ideas
- Immune Boosting for Cold Season
- Sunscreen and Bug Spray Alternatives

Building Comparison Shopping Strategies

To familiarize patients with shopping strategies that compare the overall health-safety of products in addition to price points and efficacy, the sunscreen and bug spray bulletin board incorporated research from the Environmental Working Group in the form of product toxicity ratings. This method helped patients question the “assumed to be safe” status of conventional products available at the grocery store while providing alternative options.

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Information Organization and Patient Receptivity

Boards that communicate information clearly are more effective at changing patient/parent understanding of the roles toxin and lifestyle play in visual system functions. Holistically educating patients and parents has the potential to positively impact vision therapy outcomes. Providing this information on a Wellness Bulletin Board in the waiting area allows patients and parents to gather information on the environmental and developmental issues that impact visual skills, development and overall body function. Included on the board are take-home materials such as shopping guides for creating a non-toxic pantry, recipes for homemade meals and cleaning supplies, and recommended reading lists. This method allows the recommendation to leave the office with the patient and increases the likelihood of an alteration in self and family care.

Methods and Materials

Information featured on the Wellness Board is sourced from a variety of locations ranging from peer reviewed journals, non-profit environmental organization websites, books, government websites, and independent webpages. Parents are often encouraged to explore the same sources in order to become active information gatherers, leading them to informed decision making about the health and well being of their family.

Common sources and reading suggestions:


Environmental Working Group. http://www.ewg.org. (Family of websites with information on a wide variety of relevant topics)