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Facts about Angelman Syndrome

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What is Angelman Syndrome?

Angelman Syndrome (AS) is a genetic, neurological disorder that occurs when there is a mutation on chromosome 15. It usually occurs in one in every 10,000 to 25,000 children. Harold Angelman, a pediatrician, first identified AS in 1965. Typically, diagnosis of Angelman Syndrome occurs between ages three to seven.

Common Physical and Developmental Features of AS

- Wide, smiling mouth, thin upper lip, prominent chin, and deep set eyes
- Below average head size
- Jerky body movements
- Delayed motor development, including sitting and walking
- Light hair and eyes
- Speech delays
- Severe learning disabilities
- Poor feeding problems, including difficulties sucking and limited weight gain
- Significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and adaptive skills (social skills and activities of daily living)

Behavior Characteristics

Children with Angelman Syndrome exhibit many similar behaviors. They are typically very happy, affectionate, sociable, and may laugh at inappropriate times. It is also common for children with Angelman Syndrome to be hyperactive, have a limited attention span, and require far less sleep than their peers.

Communication Skills

Children with Angelman Syndrome tend to have problems with speech development. Most AS children have limited speech or no speech at all. They may develop single word use between 10-18 months of age (i.e., mama); however, they tend to use these words infrequently and without meaning. Their comprehension or receptive skills are usually stronger than their expressive skills. The majority of children with Angelman Syndrome express their needs using sign language,

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gestures, picture communication boards, and communication devices.

Treatment and Prognosis

Children with Angelman Syndrome benefit significantly from special education services. Early speech, physical, and occupational therapies help improve their communication, gross, and fine motor skills. As these individuals reach adulthood, their hyperactivity decreases and sleep patterns improve. People with AS have near-normal life expectancies but will require support throughout their life.

Information

Find parent support and further information on Angelman Syndrome at: Angelman Syndrome Foundation, Inc. 1-800-432-6435 http://www.angelman.org

Resources:

Angelman syndrome. Mayo Clinic. Accessed 5/25/23 from https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/angelman-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20355621

What is Angelman Syndrome. Angelman Syndrome Foundation. Accessed 5/25/23 from https://www.angelman.org/what-is-as/