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**Introduction**

The study examined the presence of early indicators of autism in the first year of life of 110 babies originating from different cultures, who were later diagnosed with autism.

**Methods**

**Participants**

The study, which was conducted from 1997 until 2007, examined 84 (76.4%) boys and 26 (23.6%) girls, from 1997 until 2007, examined 84 (76.4%) boys and 26 (23.6%) girls, who were later diagnosed with autism at the age of 2-3 years.

**Procedure**

Video-recordings of the first 15 months of the participants’ lives (taken before developmental disorder was suspected) were analyzed retrospectively by trained professionals. Variables associated with autistic characteristics were measured according to validated parameters of duration and frequency.

**Findings**

The study’s findings indicated that 89% of the studied infants exhibited indicators associated with autism during the first 15 months of life.

**Objectives**

**Variables investigated:**

1. **Lack of Eye Contact** - during:
   - closeness, feeding, play, averting gaze (Moore 1978; Morton & Johnson, 1999).
2. **Lack of Reaction to Voice / presence** - no smile or babbling, no attempt to divert attention, no reaction to parents’ departure (Ananda & Frith, 2008).
3. **Excessive Passivity** - lack of:
   - crying, movement, interest in the surroundings, tracking people with their gaze, (Greenspan, 2005).
5. **Excessive Activity** - restless movement, persistent crying, obsessive occupation with an object, lack of self-regulation (Greenspan, 2005).
7. **Head Circumference** - accelerated growth during first year (Bauman, 2003; Dunn & Westman, 1995).
8. **Aversion to Touch** - contraction, recoil, dissatisfaction while being held, cuddled or kissed, lack of sensory modulation (Dunn & Westman, 1995).

**Diagram 1: Symptoms’ analyses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathological findings</th>
<th>No symptoms visible</th>
<th>Symptoms visible</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>89%</td>
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</table>

(All the graphs / table / diagrams / relate to n = 110)

**Table 1: Co-existence of two variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delayed motor development</th>
<th>Aversion to touch</th>
<th>Aversion to voice or presence</th>
<th>Lack of eye contact</th>
<th>Excessive activity</th>
<th>Excessive passivity</th>
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**Graph 1: Symptoms’ findings**

**Secondary Findings**

**Diagram 2: Parents’ observation data**

- Parents had suspected unusual signs
- Extended family noticed but did not tell the parents
- Family members suggested testing the baby, but were ignored
- Parents/family had not noticed any unusual signs

**Conclusions**

These findings affirm the assumption that indicators for autism frequently appear in the first year of life, indicating that it is possible to conduct screening and detect autism in the early stages of infancy, significantly earlier than diagnosis is usually available.

**Clinical Implications**

The study led to construction of a screening scale to identify indices associated with autistic characteristics in the first year of life - the Early Signs of Pre-Autism Screening Scale for Infants ESPASI (Alonim, et al., 2007). The scale is used in Medical Centers in Israel.