



GV Basavaraja
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Sumitha Nayak

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B Rajsekhar
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Kripasindhu Chatterjee
Nehal Patel
Rupesh Masand

Section Editor
Sumitha Nayak

Section Co-Editor
Priya Shivalli

An Algorithm Approach to Pediatric Diagnosis

Poor Scholastic Performance

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Lalitha Wadhwa

Introduction

- Poor scholastic performance is referred to as specific developmental disorders of scholastic skills (SDDSS).
- This is an abnormality in cognitive processing. This is largely attributed to biological dysfunction.
- SDDSS comprises groups of disorders manifested by specific and significant impairments of scholastic skills.
- The occurrence of SDDSS is more common in boys than in girls.

Etiology

Etiology of SDDSS is given in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1: Etiology of SDDSS.

TYPE	DISORDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical problems• Emotional disorders• Psychiatric disorders• Neurological disorders• Environmental factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hearing and visual impairment• Repeated failures• Fear of bullying• Substance abuse• Malnutrition

Presentation

- SDDSS frequently occurs in conjunction with other clinical syndromes such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, and specific developmental disorder of motor function or speech and language.
- The normal patterns of skill acquisition are disturbed from early stages of development, e.g., poor scholastic achievement, language delay, severe spelling disorder, reading disorder.

Diagnostic Pointers

- There must be a clinically significant degree of impairment in the specified scholastic skill.
- The impairment must be specific.
- The impairment must be developmental.
- There must be no external factors.
- It must not be due to corrected visual/hearing impairment.

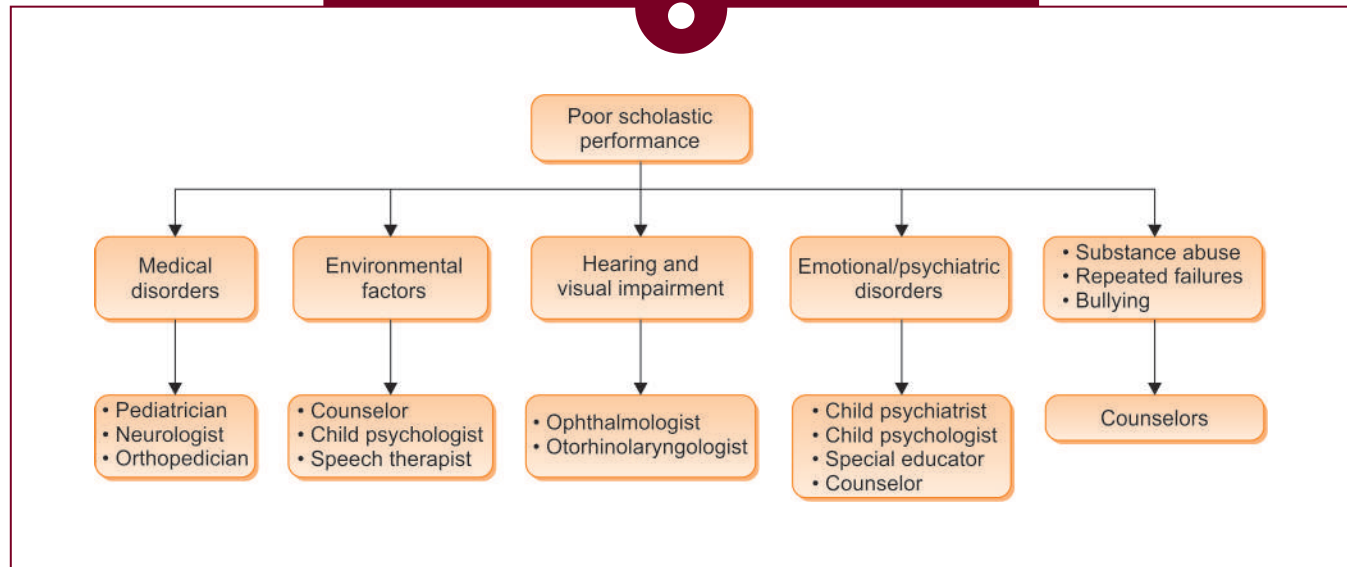
Red Flags

- Delayed achievement of early milestones should raise the suspicion of associated scholastic impairment.
- Delayed milestones act as pointers. Some of these include the following:

No visual fixation by	2 months
No localization by	6 months
No sitting with support	9–10 months
No standing alone by	16 months
No walking alone by	18 months
No single words by	18 months
No imaginative play by	3 years

- A multipronged management is required. The team should comprise pediatricians, ophthalmologists, otorhinolaryngologists, pediatric neurologists, child psychiatrists, child psychologists, and counselors.
- Some standard tests like WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) or the SBIS (Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale) may be undertaken for determining the child's IQ.

Approach to a Child with Poor Scholastic Performance



Suggested Reading

- American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association; 2013. [online] Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596> [Last accessed May, 2024].
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