

Preface



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Neurodevelopmental disabilities, often included under the category of “developmental disabilities,” are a diverse group of chronic disorders that begin at anytime during the development process (including conception, birth, and growth), up to 22 years of age and usually last throughout an individual’s lifetime.¹ The underlying basis for these disorders lies in fundamental deficits in the developing brain due to genetic, prenatal, perinatal, metabolic, and other factors.² Developmental disabilities affect 17% of individuals younger than 18 years of age in the United States.¹ Prevention, along with early recognition and intervention, are critically important to mitigate the enormous personal and socioeconomic impact of these disorders. It is estimated that the lifetime cost for those born in 2000 with an intellectual disability will be \$50 billion, \$11 billion for cerebral palsy, \$2 billion for hearing loss, and \$2.5 billion for vision impairment.¹

Historically, the field of neurodevelopmental disabilities has evolved based on a firm foundation of basic and clinical neurosciences.³ Much of the credit for the recognition of neurodevelopmental disabilities as a specialty in the United States goes to the father of developmental pediatrics, Dr. Arnold J Capute (1923-2003), and his fellows from the Kennedy Krieger Institute at John Hopkins University (Baltimore, Maryland).^{4,5}

Neurodevelopmental disability was recognized as a specialty by the American Board of Medical Specialties in 1999. As a true reflection of its interdisciplinary nature and its foundation in neuroscience, the 4-year training curriculum is an integrated training in adult neurology with a focus on adults who have developmental disabilities (12 months of training), child neurology plus neurodevelopmental disabilities (18 months of training), and related clinical as well as basic neurosciences (18 months of training). It is a specialty that focuses on the care of individuals with developmental disabilities across the lifespan.³

A previous issue of *Pediatric Clinics of North America* entitled “The Child with Developmental Disabilities” was published in June of 1993; it was superbly edited by Dr. Mark L. Batshaw, with contributions from outstanding pioneers in this field. Since then, our understanding of neurodevelopmental disabilities has continued to advance at a rapid pace with advances in all aspects of neurosciences.

In this issue and the December 2008 issue of *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, we present selected topics in developmental disabilities with excellent contributions from specialists in child neurology, neurodevelopmental pediatrics, child and adolescent psychiatry, physiatry, other pediatric subspecialties, genetics, neuropsychology, and other allied fields as a true reflection of the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of this field. We sincerely thank our contributors for sharing their invaluable time and expertise. We thank Carla Holloway at Elsevier for allowing us the opportunity to prepare these issues and working diligently with us in great patience during the entire process from conception to publication (ie, *ab ovo usque ad mala*).

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