

Assessing Early Communicative Milestones in Preterm and Full-Term Children Using the Pebbles App

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Abstract

Children born preterm are at increased risk of delays in early communicative development. However, studies often focus on extremely or very preterm children (< 32 weeks of gestation). To address this limitation, we use data from the Pebbles App, which reflects the gestational age distribution in the population. This app allows caregivers to document their child's development and assesses the age of attainment of 14 early communicative milestones. Preliminary analyses include more than 4000 children. For most communicative milestones, we did not find significant differences between preterm and full-term children within the first two years using corrected age. However, preterm children acquired some milestones, such as babbling, earlier than full-term children. A possible explanation is the greater communicative experience during the extended time in the extrauterine environment. These findings challenge traditional assumptions about language delays in preterm children and highlight the importance of using more representative samples.