

00458 **Screening for Anxiety in Preschool Children – Early Detection for Early Intervention**

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Aims: Clinical anxiety can occur in preschool children and early intervention has shown promising outcomes. This study describes a new screening procedure in KK Women's and Children's Hospital Department of Child Development (KKH-DCD) to identify preschool children at risk of developing an anxiety disorder.

Methodology: The participants were preschool children newly referred to KKH-DCD, as well as on follow-up, from May 2017 to April 2018. Associate psychologists (who performed the developmental screening of new cases) and KKH-DCD doctors were given a list of anxiety symptoms to observe. If anxiety behaviours were observed and/or reported by parents, parents were given the Preschool Anxiety Scale (PAS). The PAS is a 28-item 5-point scale where parents report the frequency of anxiety symptoms from '0' (not true) to '4' (very often true). Doctors referred the child to a psychologist if there are anxiety concerns.

Result: Of the 3687 new-case referrals, 176 (4.5%) completed the PAS, with 130 (3.5%) showing elevated scores and 89 (2.4%) referred for psychological intervention. Of the 10494 follow-up cases, 38 (0.4%) completed the PAS, with 32 (0.3%) showing elevated significant scores and 26 (0.2%) referred for intervention. Children with elevated PAS scores but not referred for psychological intervention, had other developmental concerns and were referred for other therapy services first, or parents declined the referral. Of all the children with elevated scores, co-morbidity was high with 121 (74.7%) showing symptoms for more than one type of anxiety disorder. Most children rated significantly for social anxiety (n=117, 72.2%). Children's ages ranged from 2 to 7 years old (mean age=5).

Conclusion: Children as young as 2-years-old can be identified for early intervention. Co morbidity is high indicating that preschool children can present with a variety of anxiety symptoms. With the screening procedure, doctors can identify and refer children at risk of an anxiety disorder to a psychologist.