

Medical Differential Diagnosis for Common Pediatric Emotional or Behavioural Problems in Primary Care

ECHO Ontario CYMH Resources



Presenting Problem	Most Likely Diagnosis	Less Likely Diagnosis
Anxiety	• Diet, e.g., energy drinks, soda; excessive intake sweets • Pain, i.e., in the very young • Asthma • Hyperthyroidism • Diabetes • Steroid use (adrenal or glucocorticosteroids) • Cardiac disorders, e.g., arrhythmia	• Pheochromocytoma • Systemic Lupus Erythematosus
Sadness	• Exhaustion from sleep problems • Anemia • Low Vit B12, Vit D levels • Hypothyroidism • Post-Concussive Syndrome • Meds: Isoretinoin, oral contraceptives, Depo-Provera, Interferon	• Infectious Mononucleosis • Chronic Fatigue Syndrome • Autoimmune Disorders • Addison's Disease
Inattention	• Diet, e.g., energy drinks, soda; excessive intake sweets • Pain, i.e., in the very young • Sleep deprivation • Hypothyroidism	• Focal or multi-focal seizures
Hyperactivity	• Sleep deprivation • Inappropriate stimulant use • Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	• Heavy metal toxicity • Genetic Disorders (in very young)
Aggression	• Diet, e.g., energy drinks, soda; excessive intake sweets • Pain, i.e., in the very young • Sleep deprivation • Hyperthyroidism • Focal or multi-focal seizures • Heavy metal toxicity	• Low levels omega 3 fatty acids? • Genetic Disorders, e.g., Prader-Willi, Fragile X



Rule Non-Compliance

Presenting Problem	Most Likely Diagnosis	Less Likely Diagnosis
Self-Harm	- Sleep deprivation - Steroid use (adrenal or glucocorticosteroid)	Genetic Disorders, e.g., Prader-Willi, Fragile X
Sleep Problems	- Diet, e.g., energy drinks, soda; excessive intake sweets - Pain, i.e., in the very young - Stimulant use - Allergic rhinitis - Atopic dermatitis	Sleep apnea
Problems Eating	- Stimulant use - GI Disorder, e.g., gastritis	
Hearing, Seeing, Feeling (somatic sensations) "Things"	- Migraine Aura - Steroid use (adrenal or glucocorticosteroids) - Hypo- or hyperglycemia - Hypoxia - Traumatic brain injury - Medication interactions or withdrawal - Viral encephalitis - Serum electrolyte or metabolic abnormalities - Sleep deprivation - Heavy metal poisoning - CO poisoning - Endocrine disorders, e.g., Cushing disease, thyroid disease - Genetic, heritable conditions - Focal or multi-focal seizures - Nutritional conditions, e.g., vitamin B6 deficiency - Oncologic conditions affecting brain or endocrine system	- Sepsis - Autoimmune disorders (e.g., multiple sclerosis, systemic lupus erythematosus) - Wilson's Disease - Huntington's Disease - Subacute sclerosing panencephalitis - Porphyria - Nicotine poisoning (young child) - Organophosphorus poisoning

