Developmental Checkups for All Children
Three Good Choices for Practices and Providers:
ASQ, PEDS, and PEDS: DM

By Margaret Dunkle and Janet Hill

Every young child needs regular developmental checkups. Quick, easy developmental screening picks up problems before they become obvious or have a chance to fester and grow. It also opens the door to intervention early on, when it can do the most good.

Early intervention works. And the sooner a possible problem is spotted and effectively addressed, the sooner the child will reap the benefits. Developmental screening tools alert providers to areas of a child’s development – from movement and mental health to language and learning – where they need to take a closer look and follow up with assessment, diagnosis, services, and treatment.

Regular developmental checkups with a good screening tool are as much a part of good pediatric practice as regularly measuring a child’s height and weight.

The AAP recommends that physicians do developmental screenings with a high-quality tool at least 3 times before a child’s third birthday – at the 9-month, 18-month, and 24- or 30-month pediatric visits. http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/118/1/405.pdf For preschoolers (children ages 3-5), the AAP also recommends regular developmental screenings. http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/108/1/192

Three general developmental screening tools (see chart on page 14) stand out from the rest – ASQ (the Ages and Stages Questionnaires), PEDS (Parent’s Evaluation of Developmental Status), and PEDS:DM (PEDS: Developmental Milestones). These tools cover all developmental domains and:

• Are accurate – correctly identifying at least 70% of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with and without disabilities, delays, or developmental problems – and backed up by solid research;
• Are short, low cost, and easy to administer and score;
• Rely on what parents know and observe about their child, which also makes them appropriate across many cultures;
• Can be completed in many settings – in a pediatric or family medicine practice, in a child care center or Head Start program, during a home visit to a family with a young child, or even online; and
• Provide a great way to communicate with parents, make the most of every well-child visit, and comply with state and federal requirements.

These 3 tools are billable under CPT Code #96110 (developmental screening) in fee-for-service medical settings, compatible with electronic medical records (EMR), and either already available online or will be shortly.

ASQ, PEDS and PEDS:DM are alike in that they are all high-quality. They also have some differences: for example, the age ranges they cover, the time they take to administer and score, available languages and reading level, the questions they ask, and their “feel.”

A health care provider cannot go wrong with any of these tools. The table below provides information about ASQ, PEDS and PED:DM so that a provider can make the right choice for his or her office or practice.

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<th>Tool</th>
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<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Scoring</th>
<th>The Science Behind the Tool</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASQ</strong></td>
<td>Ages and Stages Questionnaires</td>
<td>All Domains Covered</td>
<td>Sensitivity: 80-90%</td>
<td>4-60 months (5 years)</td>
<td>Pass/fail score for each developmental domain. Provides a cutoff score in each developmental domain (2 standard deviations below the mean).</td>
<td>English, Spanish, French and Korean Vietnamese expected in 2009. Unpublished versions in additional languages available from publisher. Published validation studies.</td>
<td>Initial purchase: $199 per kit (either paper or CD-ROM), including ASQ User's Guide and 19 age-specific forms to be copied as screenings are done. To administer, score, interpret each screen: $4.60 (copying age-specific forms and staff time).</td>
<td>Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, PO Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285, 800-638-3775; <a href="http://www.brookespublishing.com">www.brookespublishing.com</a> and <a href="http://www.agesandstages.com">www.agesandstages.com</a> For ASQ-Online (released 2009), see <a href="http://www.patientool.com">www.patientool.com</a></td>
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