Intellectual Disability
Outline

• Definition
• Medical investigation
• Common syndromes
• Associated comorbidity and management
• Educational issues
• Medication
• Transition to adulthood
Definition

• Terminology differs across Western world
• Australia   intellectual disability
• UK            learning disabilities
• USA          mental retardation
Definition

• A significant impairment of cognitive and adaptive functions, with age of onset before 18 years.

• Usual presentation is with impairments in adaptive functioning.
DSM-IV and ICD-10

• DSM IV
  • “dysfunction or impairment in >2 areas: communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health and safety”
  • onset before age 18
DSM-1V and ICD-10

• ICD-10
  • “mental retardation is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind, which is especially characterised by impairment of skills manifested during the developmental period, contributing to the overall level of intelligence- cognitive, language, motor and social abilities”
Adaptive Functioning

• Refers to how effectively individuals cope with everyday life demands, and how well they meet standards of personal independence expected of someone of that age and socioeconomic and cultural background.
Adaptive functioning

- influenced by a number of factors
- motivation
- personality style
- education, social and vocational opportunities
- general medical conditions and mental disorders that co-exist with ID
Cognitive Functioning
WHO 1968

- mild ID       IQ       50-55 to 70
- moderate ID   IQ       35-40 to 50-55
- severe ID     IQ       20-25 to 35-40
- profound ID   IQ       below 20-25
Old terminology

- idiot- profound
- imbecile -moderate/severe
- moron or feeble minded- mild
Measures of adaptive functioning

• Is the instrument suitable to the ethnic and cultural background?
• Vineland - uses a number of different sources to gauge adaptive functioning
Frequency

• occurs in 1-10 % of the population and is most accurately diagnosed in the school years.
• Developmental delay often used in preschool years
• sex ratio 1.5 :1 M:F
• biological inequity related to the sex chromosomes with the well established X-linked single gene mutations
Frequency

• If we use the IQ construct then we assume it is a normally distributed trait in the general population and therefore 2 % of individuals would have an IQ less than 70.

• Most studies report rates of 1-2.5%

• In those with IQ’s less than 50 the frequency is 0.3-0.5%
Demography

• mild intellectual disability is associated with low social class

• a much weaker association exists in people with more severe ID
Aetiology

• WHY INVESTIGATE?
• 1. Diagnosis provides prediction
• 2. Often vigorously sought by the family
• 3. Helps establish accurate recurrence risk
• 4. Prevents expensive unnecessary and invasive investigations
• 5. Helps guide treatment and management
Diagnostic yield

• significant improvement in yield over last 2 decades
• high frequency of the involvement of genes
• most important studies include thorough physical examination
• cytogenetics, neuroimaging and accurate EEG recording
Aetiology

• no longer true that the greatest yield is in those with more severe ID
• due to newer diagnostic techniques in dysmorphology, cytogenetics and molecular genetics, neuroimaging and clinical neurophysiology yield is not dependent on degree of ID any longer
Causes of ID

- Chromosomal abnormalities • 4-28%
- Syndromes • 3-7%
- Monogenic conditions known • 3-9%
- Structural CNS • 7-17%
## Causes of ID

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complications of prematurity</td>
<td>2-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endocrine/metabolic causes</td>
<td>1-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cultural-Familial” ID</td>
<td>3-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique monogenic</td>
<td>1-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>30-50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evolving Phenotype over Time

- Rett syndrome
- Prader Willi syndrome
- Angelman syndrome
- Velocardiofacial syndrome
- Williams syndrome
- Noonan syndrome
- Fragile X syndrome
History and physical examination

- detailed birth and prenatal history
- hereditary and family history
- three generation pedigree
Physical examination

- skin changes
- documentation of minor anomalies or abnormal findings by detailed description and measurement
- video monitoring of posture and gait or behaviour characteristics.
- serial evaluations over several years
- hearing and vision
Diagnosis-Genetics

- Imprinting may be cause of differential expression in conditions affecting same portion of genome eg Prader Willi and Angelman
- Trinucleotide repeat expansion is another mechanism
- Rearrangement of subtelomeric regions recently implicated
Diagnosis-Genetics

- high resolution banding
- FISH (fluorescence in situ hybridisation)
- subtelomeric analysis is important in moderate to severe ID
- these subtelomeric chromosome defects have been found in 6.5-7.4% of children with mod-severe ID
Diagnosis-Metabolic

- metabolic testing should be focused
- neonatal hypotonia, progressive coarsening of features, loss of skills, recurrent coma etc
- acid base
- plasma and urine amino acids
- organic acids
- thyroid screen
Diagnosis-Metabolic

• lysosomal enzyme analysis
• plasma and urine carnitine analysis,
• plasma VLCFA
• extremely low yield for unselected metabolic screening
Neuroimaging

- consider especially in patients with
- microcephaly
- macrocephaly
- neurologic signs (spasticity, ataxia, dystonia, seizures, loss of psychomotor skills, abnormal reflexes)
- abnormal cranial contour
Neuroimaging

- CT for cranial synostosis or where intracranial calcification is likely (TS, intrauterine infection)
- MRI study of choice
- PET scanning
- may help date onset of problem (prenatal, perinatal, postnatal).
Environmental factors

• lead and methylmercury poisoning
• alcohol
• thalidomide
• valproic acid
• polychlorinated biphenyls, dioxins, pesticides and tobacco smoke may be potential neurotoxins
Behavioural Phenotypes

• conditions with a known cause and a characteristic behavioural presentation
• Down, fragile X, 22q 11 deletion, Prader-Willi, Angelman’s, Rett’s, Smith-Magenis, feotal alcohol syndromes
• individually rare but together 0.5% of child population
Down syndrome

- 1/600 livebirths
- 1/3 of all cases of severe and profound ID
- Smaller proportion of those with mild to moderate ID
- 1/3 psychiatric disorder
- 1/4 develop epilepsy in adulthood
- Many develop Alzheimer’s in 40’s
22q11 deletion syndrome

- 1/3000 or even 1/2000 children
- IQ can be normal and severe ID rare
- Attention deficits, nonverbal learning disability, lack of energy
- Autistic type features
- Abnormal brain changes on MRI
22q11 deletion syndrome

- 85% cases have submicroscopic deletion at 22q11.2.
- Wide phenotypic expression
- 180 associated anomalies
- facial dysmorphism
- congenital heart disease
- hypotonia and immune disorders
22q11 deletion syndrome

- hypernasal speech is due to submucous cleft palate
- velopharyngeal insufficiency or cleft palate
- infections of respiratory tract and ear due to partial or total absence of the thymus gland
- Fits - check calcium levels because of aberrant functioning if the parathyroid glands
Fragile X syndrome

- third most common 1/3000
- distal part of the long arm of X chromosome
- trinucleotide repeat expansion
- apart from ID, boys have more deficits in motor skills, autistic features, social anxiety, tangential language, hyperactivity, attentional difficulties
Fragile X syndrome

- hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli and social stimuli
- inhibitory control deficits
- macroorchidism (100 mls) only past puberty
- girls with fragile X have fewer problems
Fragile X syndrome

- Scoring system of 6 historical/clinical characteristics
- ID, family history, elongated face, large or prominent ears, attention deficit hyperactivity and autistic-like behaviour
- if we only test those with 5 out of 6 then 60 % of testing could be eliminated without missing positive cases
Fragile X syndrome

• laboratory confirmation is relatively inexpensive
• molecular analysis of the FMR1 gene
• normal CGG repeat segments <50
• premutations 50-230 repeats
• full mutations >230 repeats
Fragile X syndrome

• deletions and point mutations of the FMR1 are rare but should be looked for in persons with characteristic phenotypes and normal CGG repeat analysis

• Other fragile sites FRAXE may be found using cytogenetic and molecular studies

• Test anyone with unexplained ID especially with family history
Prader-Willi syndrome

- loss of the paternal contribution of the proximal portion of the long arm of chromosome 15 (deletion or maternal disomy or imprinting of 15q11-13)
- high incidence of ID
- obsessive, repetitive activities
- mood instability, self mutilation
Prader- Willi syndrome

- 1/10,000
- hypotonia, failure to thrive, delayed sexual development, scoliosis, acromicria, small stature and persistent skin picking
- Flat face prominent forehead with bitemporal narrowing and almond shaped eyes with triangular mouth
Prader-Willi

- first 6 months
- hypotonia, feeding difficulties, sleepiness
- 1-4 years hyperphagia develops due to hypothalamic abnormalities
- hypotonia improves
- most important issue is dietary management
- medication, GH, behavioural approach
Angelman syndrome

• caused by loss of maternal contribution to proximal portion of long arm of chromosome 15
• no speech
• obsessions, compulsions, overactivity, eating and sleeping difficulties
• 50% have episodes of inappropriate laughter
Rett syndrome

- 1/10,000 females
- rarely occurs in males
- Distal arm of Xq28 75% due to mutation of MECP2 gene
- normal development until 6-18 months
- deceleration of head growth
Rett Syndrome

- inability to walk
- ataxic movements of torso and limbs
- rate of regression is variable months
- regression is followed by a period of stabilisation then re-emergence of skills
- hyperventilation and breath holding
- facial grimacing and hand ringing
Rett syndrome

- Loss of purposeful hand movements with stereotypic movements
- Loss of verbal skills
- All lead to loss of function, physical (scoliosis and leg deformities), social, linguistic and adaptive behaviours
Foetal alcohol syndrome

- neuronal apoptosis may be triggered in the last trimester and this may be sensitive time for the effects of ethyl alcohol (intrauterine synaptogenic phase)

- Studies of 10-12 year old boys, show those whose parents with alcohol and drug abuse have a higher rate of ID than a control group
Foetal alcohol syndrome

• Longitudinal studies of mothers with a history of alcohol abuse in pregnancy show a trend towards a dose response relationship between level and length of exposure to alcohol and intellectual disability and behaviour problems

• smoking and alcohol in pregnancy associated with ADHD
Prematurity

- birthweight < 1000g risk factor for ID
- most survivors of 22-26 weeks will be free of a major disability although 20% will have ID diagnosed later
- 40-50% will develop neurodevelopmental and neuropsychiatric problems in childhood and teenage years
Infections

• meningitis and encephalitis in early infancy and childhood still cause ID although the outcomes are much better now
• intrauterine CMV, toxoplasmosis and rubella continue to cause ID
• measles and SSPE
Traumatic brain injury

• increases the risk of intellectual disability
• American study showed that exposure to violence and trauma related psychological distress showed a decrease in IQ of 7.5 points and a reduction in reading achievement by 10 points
Chemicals

- Radiotherapy, chemotherapy and intrathecal corticosteroids all implicated in ID
- Prenatally exposed survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed the critical time was 8th-15th week of gestation and the increase in prevalence of ID was linearly dose related
Medical Problems

• increased rate of medical problems
• epilepsy 14-44% higher in more severe ID
• combination of ID and epilepsy is a strong predictor of psychiatric and behavioural problems
• Hypothyroidism is common in Down syndrome
Medical problems

- Stomach cancer, and cancer of gall bladder, oesophagus, testis, thyroid and connective tissue all occur with greater frequency.
- Visual problems 10 times more common; cataract and keratoconus also common.
- Hearing problems 40 times more common.
- In one study of institutionalised people with IQ<50 69% had constipation.
Psychiatric disorders

• Over represented in ID population
• As IQ decreases, these increase
• psychotic conditions, pica, self- injurious behaviours, stereotypies and ADHD symptoms common
Psychiatric disorders

- Schizophrenia over-represented
- 4.4% vs 0.4% in general population
- similar rates in autism
- other psychiatric disorders are at least as common in an adult population of people with ID as general community sample
Forensic issues

• Low verbal IQ associated with increased risk of conviction for violent crimes not accounted for by socioeconomic or educational status

• most common crimes are child sexual abuse and arson

• also those with ID are at greater risk of violence and sexual abuse
Treatment and intervention

• Psychosocial, psychological and educational treatment help with overall adjustment and behaviour in deprived children with low IQ
• possibly may increase IQ as well
• Behavioural methods for self injury appear to be best if used systematically by well trained people
Psychotropic Medication

- Recent Cochrane review
- 8 randomised controlled trials showed no evidence of whether antipsychotics helped or harmed adults with ID and challenging behaviours
Risperidone

- American study 2002
- double blind randomised controlled
- using risperidone for disruptive behaviours in 118 children with ID aged 5-12 years
- good benefit and few side effects (slight weight gain)
- another small study showed sedation and weight gain were greater problems
Psychotropic Medication

• Other drugs include naltrexone, mood stabilisers, serotenergics

• Antiepileptics sometimes helpful although one study using valproic acid in a group with ID and epileptiform discharges on EEG, showed a deterioration in memory and increased internalising behaviours
Societal attitudes

• 200 years ago these children were often left to die
• Early 20th century eugenics movement suggested sterilisation to prevent spreading of genes to future generations
• Last 25 years more respect given to rights of people with ID