

Appendicular performance of preterm newborn babies at three months of corrected age

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Introduction. Child development is made up of stages in which the abilities of the nursing infant to relate with the world improve. During the first months of postnatal life there is a development of visuomotor functions, and their integration leads to the appearance of appendicular functions around the third and fourth months of age. This development may be hindered by neonatal and perinatal factors such as prematurity and low weight at birth. **Objective.** This work aims at identifying the appendicular motor functions presented by preterm nursing babies at three months of corrected age. **Methodology.** The instrument used for the assessment of visuomotor behavior was the Method for Evaluation of Nursing Infants' Visual Conduct, considering the responses obtained from appendicular motor function tests. The theoretical support was based on scientific literature research, with the following descriptors: sensory-motor performance, visuomotor coordination, infant development, nursing infants and prematurity. 74 preterm nursing infants with a gestational age between 28 full weeks and 36 weeks and 6 days were assessed. They had no neurological lesions, congenital malformations and/or genetic syndromes, presenting an apgar equal to or higher than 7. **Results.** Concerning the test for increase of movements in the upper limbs (test 8), 53.4% of those assessed performed that function. As for the test of stretching the arm towards the object seen (test 9), only 17% performed that movement. It is worth mentioning that without the age correction those values go down to 37,8% and 4,1% for those tests, respectively. It was observed that gestational age correction brought the studied group close to the responses expected for the corresponding age. **Conclusion:** the Guide for Assessment of Nursing Infants' Visual Conduct has proven to be a safe instrument for the detection, in the first three months of life, of delayed visuomotor ability development. Gestational age correction enables the nursing infant to present a more organized nervous system, favoring reliable visual behavior responses. **Contribution to practice:** the utilization of assessment instruments allows the occupational therapist to identify possible development delays, thus fundamenting clinical practice for precocious intervention.