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Different sensory profile in children with behavioral insomnia and feeding disorders

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Introduction: Behavioral insomnia (BI) and feeding difficulties (FD) are two prevalent conditions among infants. The sensory profile of these children is only rarely considered a part of their routine pediatric assessment and treatment.

Objective: To investigate the sensory profile of children with BI and children with FD in comparison with healthy controls.

Methods: Children 7-36 months of age were recruited: 25 with BI, 28 children with FD, 32 children were recruited at well baby care clinics and served as controls.

Sensory profile was assessed using the validated Infant/Toddler Sensory Profile questionnaire.

Results: Significant differences in raw scores of oral processing (24.2 ± 3.2 vs. 27.2 ± 4.0 ; $p=0.0002$) sensation avoiding and low threshold quadrants were found between the BI group compared to controls (48.4 ± 7.0 vs. 52.6 ± 5.0 ; $p=0.001$ and 89.6 ± 13.2 vs. 97.8 ± 9.6 ; $p=0.001$ respectively). Auditory and oral processing sections scores (37.2 ± 3.3 vs. 39.3 ± 2.8 ; $p=0.028$ and 20.8 ± 3.8 vs. 27.2 ± 4.0 ; $p<0.0001$) were significantly different in the FD group compared with controls. Oral processing score was significantly different in the FD group compared with the BI group (20.8 ± 3.8 vs. 24.2 ± 3.2 ; $p=0.005$). Low sensory registration and low threshold quadrants were significantly different between the FD group and controls (48.7 ± 4.6 vs. 51.2 ± 2.6 ; $p=0.027$ and 87.1 ± 11.8 vs. 97.8 ± 9.6 ; $p=0.001$ respectively).

Conclusions: Significant differences in sensory profile were found in children with BI and FD, as compared to controls. These alterations may underlie the development of these two common disorders in infancy.

A better understanding of these sensory difficulties and the suitable routine assessment, guidance and treatment of these difficulties by the Occupational Therapist is necessary.