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THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING THE SUBJECT "CLINICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION"

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Abstract

This article discusses issues such as the causes of impairments in children with disabilities and their impact on psychological and physical development; the general structure of the human body and its condition in the presence of various impairments; the functioning of the brain and nervous system; the physiology and pathology of visual, auditory, and speech sensory systems; and the causes of various diseases affecting these systems and their impact on the development of general and specific human characteristics.

Keywords: Children with developmental anomalies, higher nervous activity, vision, hearing, perception, memory, children with intellectual disabilities (oligophrenia), autism syndrome.

The aim of teaching this subject is for the future specialist to gain an understanding of the causes, clinical progression, forms, and complications of impairments in children with disabilities—as well as the resulting negative impact on their mental, psychological, and physical development—while recognizing the crucial role of medical knowledge in addressing these conditions.

The objective of this course is to theoretically and practically equip students with the medical knowledge and skills necessary to understand the causes and clinical manifestations of impairments and disorders in children with developmental disabilities—specifically those affecting the higher nervous system, vision, hearing, and speech—as well as the impact of these conditions on the child's overall health and specific impairments.

As a specialized subject, this course provides students with foundational medical knowledge and skills regarding the impairments and disorders found in children with disabilities; these competencies are crucial for students working with such children in specialized educational institutions. No two children are alike; there is no such thing as two identical children. Even among children of the same age, there are distinct differences: some may be temperamental while others are cheerful, and some sing well while others cannot sing at all.

From the very moment a child is born, they see, hear, and sense physical contact, pain, heat, smells, and tastes.

Understanding the surrounding world begins with sensation and perception—that is, with the reflection of real-world objects and phenomena in the child's mind.

A child's perception matures significantly during the first few years of life; by the age of two, they begin to distinguish objects based on color, shape, and size, recognize familiar sounds, and so on.

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Various sensory abilities develop, such as visual observation, listening, differentiating objects by their external characteristics, and the ability to imitate what is seen and heard.

A child needs to gain a variety of impressions—seeing and touching objects, observing the activities of adults, and listening to diverse sounds. This is a necessary condition for children's sensory development. In turn, the timely development of sensory abilities lays the foundation for a child's intellectual development.

Mental processes such as attention, memory, aspiration, and interest are of great importance to a child's intellectual development.

The timely and proper development of a child's speech is the basis for intellectual development. Speech significantly influences the development of mental processes—such as perception and memory—as well as the child's activities. As a child's speech begins to develop, the role of adults' words as a tool for upbringing increases.

The formation of a child's personality begins from the very first days of life. Based on what they see and hear daily, the child expresses their attitude toward the world and the people around them; the assessments a child makes regarding the actions and work of adults and the events taking place, as well as their attitudes toward others—all of these factors influence the shaping of the child's moral character.

The disruption of conditions necessary for a child's development—whether in the womb or after birth—can lead to various physical or mental developmental impairments or deficits. Children with developmental impairments should be educated and raised either alongside typically developing peers in inclusive settings or within specialized educational institutions. Only impairments that significantly impact a child's overall development justify classifying them as a child in need of special support. For instance, if a child can hear only with their left ear but this impairment does not hinder their overall development and allows them to keep pace with school peers, they do not fall into the category of children requiring special support. Similarly, impairments acquired by adults due to certain causes do not warrant classifying the individual as someone in need of special support if those impairments do not affect their overall development.

Severe or drastic changes observed in the physical or mental development of children with developmental impairments negatively affect the formation of their personalities. Therefore, special conditions must be created for their upbringing and education; specifically, they need to be educated and raised either in specialized preschools and schools or—alongside typically developing peers—using special programs and textbooks where necessary.

The impairment observed in any child with a developmental disability may be linked to organic or functional changes in the central or peripheral nervous system.

Various developmental deficits in children can also arise from an unfavorable environment or inadequate upbringing and education. For instance, adverse family conditions, educational neglect, a teacher's improper attitude toward the child, and many other factors can negatively impact development, preventing the child from effectively mastering the curriculum and leading to them falling behind academically. Nevertheless, we do not classify such a child as one requiring special assistance, because the developmental deficits are not linked to any organic or functional pathological changes in the body but stem from other causes.

Parents, caregivers, and teachers need to be able to distinguish such children from those requiring special needs support.

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Depending on their origins, any developmental impairment may be either congenital or acquired.

Congenital impairments often depend on the expectant mother's health and living conditions. The development of the fetus in the womb can be affected by infections, intoxication, injuries, and other factors. A mother suffering from various illnesses during pregnancy or the indiscriminate use of medications can lead to a child being born with an impairment.

Congenital impairments can also result from genetic—that is, hereditary—factors. For instance, impairments in hearing or vision and intellectual disabilities can be passed down from parent to child (e.g., phenylketonuria, Down syndrome, Rhesus factor incompatibility, etc.).

Parental alcoholism, drug addiction, or substance abuse can also lead to a child being born with an impairment.

Acquired impairments arise from the impact of harmful factors on a child's body during birth or in the period following it. Events such as brain injury during delivery or asphyxia (suffocation caused by the umbilical cord wrapping around the neck) can sometimes lead to developmental impairments.

Suffering from various illnesses during early childhood (up to the age of three)—such as meningitis, meningoencephalitis, otitis, or central nervous system injuries—can also cause such impairments to develop.

Thus, a healthy child is born only when a woman pays attention to her health during pregnancy.

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