VULNERABLE LANGUAGE SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN GALACTOSAEMIA

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Not all children with Galactosaemia (GAL) experience language impairments. Currently there is no means by which infants at risk of language deficits can be identified early. Pre-linguistic communication skills of infancy underpin oral language development and may be a means by which at-risk children can be identified early to facilitate the provision of timely intervention during the critically-formative period of language development. We report on the pre-linguistic communication skills of two 18-month old infants with GAL (one of each gender).

Performance scores from the two infants were analysed using modified t-tests where comparison was undertaken for each infant to a small (n = 3) individual control group. Additionally, direct descriptive comparison of performance was undertaken between the two infants with GAL using a criterion level of > ± 1.5 test $SD$ difference in performance score as indicative of a clinically-significant difference in performance between the two infants.

Results indicate that the male infant with GAL had significantly poorer pre-linguistic skills than his matched peers on word production, the Social and Speech composite scores and the overall Communication and Symbolic Behavior Score. There was a significant difference in performance by the female infant with GAL, but unlike the male infant, she outperformed her matched peers on the Social composite score. The male infant with GAL was performing developmentally at a level clinically-significantly below the female infant on 10 of the 11 performance measures (predominantly 3-4 $SD$ below her performance). The findings are discussed in terms of earlier identification of at-risk children.