Neurodevelopmental Disorder Associated with Prenatal Alcohol (ND-PAE)

In 2013, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5 (DSM-5) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) proposed a new diagnosis called Neurodevelopmental Disorder Associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (ND-PAE) as a condition for further study. Diagnostic criteria for this proposed disorder can be found in the DSM-5 on pages 798-801. Since ND-PAE is currently categorized as a condition for further study, widespread use of this proposed diagnostic criteria is not being utilized by the mental health community. However, mental health professionals are engaged to use the Other Specified Neurodevelopmental Disorder-315.8 (F88)-specified using the “other specified” designation-Neurodevelopmental disorder associated with prenatal alcohol exposure found on page 86 in the DSM-5 when prenatal alcohol exposure to alcohol is confirmed or highly suspected.

Fast Facts

- At this point, ND-PAE is listed as a “condition in need of further study” and is not yet ready to be employed for diagnostic use at this time.
- Criteria of ND-PAE include an IQ of less than 70 along with deficits in cognitive functioning (e.g., executive function, attention, short- and long-term memory, capacity to learn, and visual-spatial reasoning), affective dysregulation (e.g., mood and depression), and behavioral problems (e.g., impulsivity, communication, and occupation performance).
- To qualify for ND-PAE, the above-mentioned symptoms must not be better explained by other disorders or experiences such as postnatal substance use, exposure to teratogens, and traumatic environmental experiences.
- Accurate recognition and diagnosis of ND-PAE has the potential to transform the management and effectiveness of health and mental health care interventions for individuals impacted by prenatal alcohol exposure.
- A notable innovation of DSM-5 is the recognition of the interconnectedness of FASD/ND-PAE and intellectual disabilities.
- DSM-5’s publication marks the emergence of Neurodevelopmental Disorder associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (ND-PAE). This is the first appearance of FASD-related symptoms in the DSM.

References