

A child's IQ could be affected by maternal epilepsy

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A history of maternal epilepsy and its associated treatment may be linked to impaired intelligence later in life, says a new study published in *Epilepsia*. Dr. Nina Oyen, M.D., of the University of Bergen and Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Bergen, Norway, investigated the I.Q. levels of sons born to mothers with and without epilepsy, and found a correlation between intelligence and the illness.

Drawing on extensive data on maternal epilepsy reported to the Medical Birth Registry of Norway and adult I.Q. scores and anthropometric measures taken later in life, the study monitored male children until the age of nineteen, providing a long-term look at the possible effects of maternal epilepsy on fetal brain development.

The study finds that almost twenty years after birth, the sons of mothers who suffered from epilepsy before or during pregnancy exhibited reduced I.Q. scores when compared to men whose mothers did not have epilepsy. A history of maternal epilepsy was also found to be associated with shorter height.

“Our results underline the need for population-based registries with complete long-term follow-up of infants with prenatal exposure to phenobarbital and phenytoin, drugs that are still widely used in many countries,” says Oyen, noting that studying the effects of exposure to newer medications is also important. Information on the specific antiepileptic drugs used by the epileptic mothers of children in the study was not available. “It remains to be seen whether the newer antiepileptic

drugs are safer to offspring exposed during fetal life.”

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

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