

Epidemiologic study links low maternal education to intellectual disabilities in offspring

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By applying a public health approach, researchers at three universities have discovered a key indicator for increased risk of mental retardation in the general population. The study assessed population-level risk factors by linking birth records of 12-14-year-old children in Florida with their respective public school records, over the course of a school year. The results appear in the March 2008 issue of the *American Journal of Mental Retardation*.

Using the rationale that high-prevalence risk factors can have a substantial impact at the population level, even if the risk to the individual is low, Derek Chapman, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology & Community Health at Virginia Commonwealth University, Keith Scott, Professor of Psychology, at the University of Miami, and Tina L. Stanton-Chapman, Assistant Professor of Curriculum Instruction and Special Education, at the University of Virginia, found that low maternal education resulted in the highest risk of intellectual disability to offspring compared with other factors such as maternal illness, delivery complications, gestational age at birth, and even very low birth weight.

Extremely low birth weight infants (

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