

Review

Developmental language disorder: evidence of error?

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Abstract

The obstetric clamp was introduced in 1912 with explicit instruction to apply it only after all pulsations in the umbilical cord had ceased. Now, nearly 100 years later, evidence from randomized controlled trials is being obtained to demonstrate that delay in clamping the cord appears to cause no harm. Why are evidence and understanding gained long ago so neglected? Clamping the umbilical cord while it is still pulsating disrupts continuing postnatal circulation from infant to and from the placenta. This may cause a lapse in respiration, with impairment (or clear-cut damage) of nuclei in the brainstem auditory pathway. Injury of auditory nuclei in the midbrain causes loss of speech comprehension. Perinatal injury of this midbrain area should be investigated as a possible cause of developmental language disorders.

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