

11-16-04: Guest Speaker – Dr. Gordina of FAAP a member of the Global Pediatrics, International Adoptions Medical Support Services in East Brunswick, NJ

Topic: Medical Issues in International Adoption

WebMaster - Welcome to NJ Adoption Resource Clearing House Chat Room.

Moderator - logged on. - using Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1; SV1; (R1 1.5)) on 11/16 at 8:48pm CST)

**Moderator REMOTE_HOST(IP) - 69.142.216.149

WebMaster - We will be hosting a chat this evening from 9:00 - 10:00 this evening.

WebMaster - Good evening moderator.

Moderator - Dr. Godina will be with us shortly to host our chat tonight

WebMaster - Great. Thanks

Dr. Gordina - logged on. - using Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1; .NET CLR 1.0.3705) on 11/16 at 8:53pm CST)

**Dr. Gordina REMOTE_HOST(IP) - 69.141.39.169

WebMaster - Good evening Dr. Gordina. Thanks much for joining us.

Moderator - Welcome, Dr. Gordina

Moderator - Perhaps you can tell us about a recent case without breaching confidentiality

Dr. Gordina - You are welcome, It is a great honor to join you tonight

Dr. Gordina - let's talk about soem medical problems, frequently seen in newly adopted children

Moderator - Great

Moderator - We would be interested in that

Dr. Gordina - because most of my adopted patients do come from the countries of the Former Soviet Union, I will be using those cases as an example

Dr. Gordina - so, let's say we do have a 2,5-3 yo newly adopted child.

Moderator - What health problems do you see most often?

Dr. Gordina - - failiure to thrive, hearing problems, infestations, anemia, developmental delays, latent tuberculosis to name a few

WebMaster - Are there less problems the earlier they are adopted (eg: 2 vs 5) or about the same issues?

Dr. Gordina - yes and no

WebMaster - How so?

Dr. Gordina - younger children are less exposed to the orphanages, but at the same time they can be at the age when some problems are not showing up yet

Moderator - I wonder about fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect

Moderator - Do you see much of that in children from the former Soviet Union?

Dr. Gordina - This is a tough one

Dr. Gordina - FAS and FAE is very prevalent in coe FSU, but then US is not immune from those problems eitheruntries of th

Moderator - Of course we see FAS and FAE in many children in the US foster care system

Dr. Gordina - But unfortunately parents, adopting and fostering children domestically are less aware about this problem than families, adopting internationally

Dr. Gordina - incidence is about the same 😊

Moderator - When I did home studies, I tried to paint the worst case scenario so folks would be prepared

WebMaster - How should potential domestic adoptive parents be educated about FAS and FAE?

Dr. Gordina - We have to be aware about such possibility and take the proactive approach in any case of slow learning, behavioral problems and so on

Moderator - We have a number of books and articles in the NJARCH Library about these topics

Dr. Gordina - answering the WebMaster - read, talk, learn and look at everything with the eyes wide open

Dr. Gordina - First of all we have to make parents to be interested in reading those materials.

Moderator - Very good advice. It's always better to be prepared

Dr. Gordina - Unfortunately, many are taking the "easy" route - that would never happened to me.

Dr. Gordina - Or - this mother was only 16

Dr. Gordina - Or - there was no record of alcohol abuse

WebMaster - I think that is the role of the home study social worker as well; as the moderator said to prepare the parents as much as possible.

Dr. Gordina - Or - this kid is smart, so there is no possibility of FAS here

Dr. Gordina - Oh, yes,

Dr. Gordina - social workers are getting in the picture very early in the adoption process

Moderator - Unfortunately, whether international or domestic, the record is rarely as complete as with one's birth child

Dr. Gordina - even more, with domestic adoption/foster care records are less available than in adoptions from Russia

Moderator - At NJARCH when it is an international adoption, we always recommend a consult with a pediatrician who understands these things

Dr. Gordina - well prepared families can obtain a wealth of information from orphanages.

Dr. Gordina - Unfortunately, not all families are following this advise.

Dr. Gordina - regarding the preadoption consult with IA doc

Moderator - Yes, tell us more about that, please

Dr. Gordina - families adopting from Russia, Ukraine, Kaz (less than the first 2) can get birth records, almost complete orphanage chart, school records in the case of the older child,

Dr. Gordina - and the interesting thing, some even got the ambulatory chart with the

prenatal visits recorded. That happened when a child was placed in the orphanage later on in life

Dr. Gordina - speech evaluations, educational evaluations - all that is available even in 1-2 yo kids

Moderator - Wow, that's a lot of information!

Dr. Gordina - parents 'just' have to know how to ask for all that stuff

Moderator - How do you recommend they do that?

Moderator - Some agencies here in the US don't press for all that info.

Dr. Gordina - WHY?!

Dr. Gordina - How to ask for all this info?

Moderator - I think some placing agencies are worried about offending the placing agency.

Dr. Gordina - It is very "simple"

Dr. Gordina - parents are making the most important decision of their life

Moderator - I know that was true when I was involved in Korean adoption.

Moderator - We were urged to press for no more than the preliminary stuff

Dr. Gordina - they are not "shoping" for children, they are looking for their own child, who just happened to be born somewhere else

Dr. Gordina - Yes, in Chinese, Korean, Guatemalan adoptions that is the case

Moderator - Of course you are right, but prospective parents are anxious not to offend anyone

Dr. Gordina - but in "Russian"-type adoptions parents are there, in the orphanage. they can get all this info

WebMaster - When we adopted from Guatemala we had all the doctor's visits while he was in foster care

Dr. Gordina - you see, you can get this info

WebMaster - We had as much information as (I think) we could get; the agency just offered it; may not be the case in many agencies.

Moderator - In the former Soviet Union countries, should the adoptive parents ask the agency or ask the orphanage directly?

Dr. Gordina - both

Dr. Gordina - somebody would "blink"

Dr. Gordina - 😊

Moderator - So when we advise families, we should urge them to press for this info?

WebMaster - Do you think it makes a difference between placement in an orphanage vs. foster care overseas?

Dr. Gordina - I had a situation when orphanage director was ready to give some info, but local representative said that family don't need it

Dr. Gordina - yes you should advise against 'don't ask don't tell' policy

Dr. Gordina - foster care is usually better than orphanage

Dr. Gordina - I do have a patient in my practice who was adopted from foster care in S. Korea at the age of 6 mo - guess what - RAD

Dr. Gordina - and nobody diagnosed him for almost 10 years

Moderator - That's unusual, because Korean babies are usually carried around all day.

Moderator - Of course, I guess you can get poor foster care anywhere

WebMaster - Why was that?

Dr. Gordina - yes, but RAD-type behaviours were observed even in children adopted at birth

Moderator - Why the delay in diagnosis?

Dr. Gordina - because parents and physicians were not aware about such possibility

Dr. Gordina - actually that's exactly how i got involved in IA

Moderator - That family must have been tearing its hair out wondering what was wrong

Moderator - Even if it's a difficult diagnosis, I always think it's better to know something

Dr. Gordina - no, actually they almost gave up at that point

Moderator - Just understanding the basis for behaviors should take some emotional pressure off

Dr. Gordina - it took me 3 visits (they came to me as a regular pediatrician) to prepare for this conversation

Dr. Gordina - That exactly what happened

Moderator - What kept them from giving up?

Moderator - it must have been difficult to sit down with them

Dr. Gordina - they still do have problems, but at least they know what to expect and what to do

Dr. Gordina - I never asked

Dr. Gordina - They are nice, honest, religious people

Dr. Gordina - mom was very depressed

Moderator - I can understand that. I have a birth grandson with autism and once we knew what it was, we all could deal with it better

Dr. Gordina - they were on the verge of the divorce

Dr. Gordina - exactky

Moderator - Those behaviors in children can really make it difficult for the marital relationship

Dr. Gordina - those are very un-easy diagnoses, but at least you know what you are dealing with

Dr. Gordina - oh, yes

Dr. Gordina - any type of chronic medical problem can do it

Moderator - There are some good books about RAD that help parents see it isn't that they are "bad" parents

Dr. Gordina - I do have several families, who went through divorce after adoption, even healthy and successful

WebMaster - Moderator; do social workers prepare families for this type of possiblitiy?

Moderator - The RAD behaviors engender such negative feedback from relatives and neighbors I think it's hard for parents

Dr. Gordina - and nobosy does understand that with adoptive children the rules of aprentsing are different

Moderator - I think social workers try to prepare folks, but folks do think on the rosy side about the possibilities

Dr. Gordina - un-solicited advice from relatives and strangers can make the situation worse

Moderator - With RAD I think, outsiders think the kid just needs better discipline

Dr. Gordina - we can talk, but families have to be ready to listen

Moderator - The really don't understand the complexity of the syndrome

Dr. Gordina - and unfortunately, not every family preparing for adoption is

Moderator - Dr. Gordina, you are right, some folks are better equipped to listen than others.

Dr. Gordina - neither parents nor their physicians

Dr. Gordina - and then even psychologists are soooo ready to label everything ADD and that's it

Dr. Gordina - and then the whole issue of sensory integration, feeding problems, delays speech and delayed recognition of hearing and vision difficulties

WebMaster - It seems that ADD and ADHD is so popular now; can these be mis-diagnosed for something else?

Moderator - I recently read an article saying these diagnoses have become so much more common in recent years

Dr. Gordina - ADD is the most mis-diagnosed problem

Dr. Gordina - everything is ADD

Dr. Gordina - attention difficulties can be because of miriads of problems

Moderator - No one is sure if it's over diagnosis or if it's really more common today than 50 years ago

Dr. Gordina - all those charts and scales are good only in the special populations

Moderator - I wonder if today's kids are expected to attend more, to sit still longer, etc.

Dr. Gordina - OVERdiagnosing

Moderator - so much less outside vigorous activity

Dr. Gordina - today's kids are not allowed to fail

Moderator - overdosing perhaps because of the availability of medication??

Dr. Gordina - not only

Moderator - Easier to treat than to teach better parenting or to be more accepting of individual differences??

Dr. Gordina - it is so easy to write the script for Ritalin then to try to uncover the root of the problem

Dr. Gordina - you can not find something if you don't know what you are looking for

Dr. Gordina - a lot of learning disabilities do look like ADD

Dr. Gordina - a lot of medical problems (hearing, vision, sleep apnea) do look like ADD

Moderator - years ago David Brodzynsky suggested many adopted kids might appear to be daydreaming when they were really thinking about adoption issues

Dr. Gordina - in many cases of behavioral problems stimulants can make the things only worse

Moderator - Particularly in the latency years

WebMaster - I agree as well; that many parents are too busy to dig into what is really the problem so it's easier to medicate than figure it out.

Dr. Gordina - they were most probably just blocking out because of overstimulation

Moderator - And, I think people want a quick fix, not just parents, but the schools as well

Dr. Gordina - not only parents - schools and doctors are guilty of that too

Dr. Gordina - and even more, I found out that parents are more receptive than teachers and doctors

WebMaster - How do you suggest that we educate teachers and doctors?

Dr. Gordina - and plus to everything - insurance companies who are refusing to pay for evaluations and therapies

Dr. Gordina - talk

Dr. Gordina - talk

Dr. Gordina - scream

WebMaster - Who should be doing that?

Dr. Gordina - me, you, parents, everybody

Moderator - We have numerous families contact us because they don't believe their child's school is delivering the proper services

Dr. Gordina - ok, let's get together and talk

Moderator - We advocate for them and send them to the Educational Law Center if necessary.

Dr. Gordina - not on the net, but in person

Dr. Gordina - we do have educators who are familiar with those issues

Moderator - People don't always know they have to push for services

Dr. Gordina - and we have to educate schools

Dr. Gordina - they have to

Dr. Gordina - being your child's advocate is part of being a parent

Moderator - If you have a child who needs special services it's a part-time job to make sure everyone is doing what they need to do

Dr. Gordina - we don't want to do this

Moderator - Of course, it's part of being a parent, but it also requires being assertive

Dr. Gordina - we are trained to trust doctors and teachers

Dr. Gordina - part time?

Dr. Gordina - full time!

Dr. Gordina - Over-time

Dr. Gordina - it is exhausting and draining

Moderator - One of my kids was classified and I always felt as if I was at the school complaining, but I got what I needed

Moderator - Or really, what he needed

Dr. Gordina - no, you were right the first time

Dr. Gordina - all the family needed that

Moderator - That's true! He was happier when he was in the right program. That made all of us happy

Dr. Gordina - so it is only 3 of us talking 😊

Moderator - Yes, I am sorry, we did lot's of publicity

WebMaster - I really enjoyed our time together.

Moderator - What we can do is post the transcript in the "what's new" section of the site and others will be able to read it

Dr. Gordina - me too

Dr. Gordina - that's ok

WebMaster - Do you have any materials that you can share with us in how to help parents talk/deal with schools, doctors, etc. that we can post or offer through NJ ARCH?

Moderator - This points to the fact that it is hard to educate folks even when it's there for the taking

Dr. Gordina - there is a Russian saying that the first pancake never comes out right

Dr. Gordina - I do have to prepare something

Moderator - We do get over 2,000 visitors to the web site each month and would be happy to post anything you want to write

Dr. Gordina - I am planning to submit to JCICS meeting medical day the talk on records available during Russian adoption, so that will be ready soon

Dr. Gordina - I do have some (very old) articles on my website

WebMaster - That would be just great!

Dr. Gordina - there is a very good website www.bgcenter.com

Moderator - When it becomes available, we would like to post your paper to our website.

Moderator - We will post the link this week

Dr. Gordina - Dr. Gindis is Russian-speaking school psychologist and he has some very good info there

Moderator - Thank you so much for taking the time to join us tonight

Dr. Gordina - he even has a internet school for parents - good staff

Moderator - I heard Dr. Gindis speak at a meeting on Long Island.

Dr. Gordina - you are welcome

Moderator - He was very interesting

WebMaster - Thank you for joining us this evening, Dr. Gordina.

WebMaster - We will close the chat in just a couple of minutes.

Moderator - From time to time we will have other adoption professionals join us on the chat

Dr. Gordina - It was interesting for me too

Moderator - We will make the transcripts of the hosted chats available to the public on the web site and through our lending library

Moderator - Good night and thanks again. I am signing off

Moderator - logged off - using Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1; SV1; (R1 1.5)) on 11/16 at 9:59pm CST)