Cardiac Neurodevelopmental Outcome (CANDO) Program

Information about Neuropsychological Testing Versus Educational Testing

Children who have received treatment for congenital heart disease (CHD) may have changes in their learning due to the disease or the effects of treatment. They may be eligible for educational testing or neuropsychological testing. Please see below for differences in the types of testing.

Educational Testing
Educational testing is done by the public school system specifically to see if a child has a disability that interferes with their performance in the school setting. This testing determines if the child qualifies for educational services (such as a Section 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP). The assessments used in this type of testing focus on academic achievement (such as reading, writing, mathematics), intellectual functions (IQ), and some other skills needed for school success. Generally, the results are not used to diagnose learning or behavior disorders caused by altered brain function or development.

Neuropsychological Testing
A neuropsychological evaluation is a specialized type of assessment done by a neuropsychologist. Neuropsychology is a special area of psychology that focuses on understanding brain-behavior relationships in individuals. This is often associated with disruptions in brain development from injury or developmental disorder. Many areas involved in thinking, learning, and daily functioning are tested including memory, attention, executive function (how children exhibit mental control and self-regulation), perception, coordination, language, adaptive, and social-emotional functioning as it relates to a child’s medical history. It’s helpful for a neuropsychologist to evaluate a child during the early stages of treatment for a baseline, and in the years following in order to identify late effects of the disease and associated treatment.

For children with CHD, the American Heart Association (AHA) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends regular neurodevelopmental evaluations to monitor for possible areas of weakness. A neuropsychological evaluation can fulfill this requirement. If your child is 4 years of age or older, they may participate in neuropsychological testing as part of the Cardiac Neurodevelopmental Outcome (CANDO) Program. Melissa Duva, program coordinator, can provide additional information and begin the intake process for the Children's National Division of Neuropsychology.

For questions about neuropsychological testing, contact Wanda Rankin, CANDO Education Specialist, at 202-476-5870.