Today’s piece was prepared by Laura Lazzarini, MD, based on an NPR story [Why Countries Need To Make Sure Their Kids Learn To Play Nice](http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/06/09/481399255/kids-development)

While there has been ample research on the health impacts on children of poverty demonstrating increased mortality rates and inadequate nutrition, few studies have focused on the early cognitive and social development of these children. This NPR article discusses a study on early development in toddlers in low and middle income countries. Specifically, how these children mastered the following core skills: maintaining attention, following simple directions, getting along with others and controlling aggressive behavior as said behaviors reportedly correlate with better school performance and health, including mental health. Researchers analyzed UNICEF data on 100,000 children across 35 countries and found that one of three children ages three to four years old are not achieving at least one of the aforementioned milestones. Suggested reasons behind these developmental delays include higher rates of malnourishment and exposure to violence in children of poverty. The article also proposes potential solutions to this problem, citing a successful home visit program focused on early and intensified interactions between mothers and children. Future research aims to quantify the economic costs of “this unrealized human potential”.

Although this article addresses an underappreciated topic, it also overgeneralizes an incredibly complex issue. The article briefly mentions the core skills, but does not explain the parameters used to define and measure these core skills, which can be quite variable, especially considering the fact the data was collected from 35 different countries. Furthermore, the article does not provide the proportion of children of upper income countries failing to meet these milestones for comparison. Socioeconomic status may very well contribute to or even exacerbate developmental delays, but it is important to remember that cognitive and social developmental delays affect children of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

**RESOURCES** **FOR EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY:**

[Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT)](http://del.wa.gov/development/esit/Default.aspx) *WA State Early Intervention program*

[Early Intervention Services](http://www.del.wa.gov/development/esit/services.aspx) *WA State Early Intervention services*

**REFERENCE CITATION:**

McCoy, Dana Charles, et al. "Early Childhood Developmental Status in Low-and Middle-Income Countries: National, Regional, and Global Prevalence Estimates Using Predictive Modeling." *PLoS Med* 13.6 (2016): e1002034.

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!