The predictive validity of the AEDI: Predicting later cognitive and behavioural outcomes

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Abstract
The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a measure of early childhood development based on an instrument developed in Canada that is now used internationally. In Australia, the AEDI is a Federal Government National Progress Measure, and provides an evidence base for communities, governments and service providers to use for advocacy, policy development and resource allocation. The Australian Government administers the AEDI as a triennial census of all children across the country in their first year of full-time schooling. Although the 2009 AEDI provided the first Australia-wide population baseline, which future data collections will now be compared to, the instrument has been used in Australia since 2002. Despite some reliability and validity studies and its adoption as a National Progress Measure, the instrument is only now being validated in terms of its ability to predict later outcomes. This paper presented will investigate the (1) comparative associations, (2) sensitivity and specificity and (3) discriminatory power of the AEDI to predict indicators of social and emotional wellbeing and educational outcomes (such as NAPLAN) to 15 years of age. The results indicate that the social competence, language and cognitive development and the communication skills and general knowledge domains of the AEDI are good predictors of both cognitive and behavioural outcomes. Further to that, the AEDI performs as well as or better than established instruments such as the SDQ, PEDS, PedsQLTM and PPVT-III, and shows high specificity with moderate sensitivity. The paper supports a universal population approach, coupled with selectively targeting regions that show high numbers of children who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the five AEDI domains.