

COMMITTEE ON FETUS AND NEWBORN JOINT STATEMENT ON NEONATAL SCREENING FOR HEARING IMPAIRMENT

THE following joint statement has been approved by the Committee on Fetus and Newborn and the Executive Board of the Academy:

A common concern with the current status of screening procedures for hearing impairment among newborn infants has led to the formation of a joint committee comprising representatives of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Speech and Hearing Association. After due consideration of infant hearing screening, this joint committee developed the following statement, which has been endorsed by all three societies represented on the Committee.

In recognition of the need to identify hearing impairment as early in life as possible, auditory screening programs have been implemented in newborn nurseries throughout the country. Review of data from the limited number of controlled studies which have been reported to date has convinced us that results of mass screening programs are inconsistent and misleading.

To determine whether mass screening programs for newborn infants should indeed be instituted, intensive study of a number

of variables is essential. These should include stimuli, response patterns, environmental factors, status at the time of testing, and behavior of observers. Furthermore, confirmation of results obtained in the nursery must await data derived from extended follow-up studies which involve quantitative assessment of hearing status.

In view of the above considerations and despite our recognition of the urgent need for early detection of hearing impairment, we urge increased research efforts, but cannot recommend routine screening of newborn infants for hearing impairment.

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