

was evaluated in relation to blood lead levels and behavior, particularly pica. Children with blood levels less than 30 mcg/dl were compared with a group having blood levels greater than 30 mcg/dl. The study verified the positive association between blood lead levels and pica, an association recognized for many years. Decreased calcium intake and three other calcium measures were not related to blood lead levels and calcium intake was not associated with pica scores. (Laraque D et al. Blood lead, calcium status and behavior in preschool children. AJDC Feb 1990; 144:186-189). Pica has been emphasized as a common prelude to plumbism (Millichap JG et al. Lead paint: A hazard to children. Lancet 1952; 2:360) and should prompt the early diagnosis of lead exposure and prevention of neurobehavioral deficits. The identification of children with lead poisoning in need of chelation is possible using unstimulated urinary lead excretion without the necessity of the CaNa₂EDTA provocative test. (Berger OG et al. Using unstimulated urinary lead excretion to assess the need for chelation in the treatment of lead poisoning. J Pediatr 1990; 116:46-51).

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS (PCBs) AND COGNITIVE DEFICITS

The effects of prenatal exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and related contaminants on the CNS function of infants born to women who had consumed Lake Michigan sports fish have been investigated in 236 children previously evaluated for PCB-related deficits in infancy and reassessed at four years of age in the Psychology Department, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI and the Michigan Department of Public Health, Lansing, MI. Prenatal exposure, indicated by umbilical cord serum PCB levels, was associated with poorer short term memory function on both verbal and quantitative tests and the adverse effects were dose dependent and not attributed to other variables. Exposure from nursing was unrelated to cognitive performance. The study demonstrates continuation of toxic effects through early childhood. (Jacobson JL et al. Effects of in utero exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls and related contaminants on cognitive functioning in young children. J Pediatr Jan 1990; 116:38-45).

COMMENT. Polychlorinated biphenyls were once used in industrial products and were banned in the United States in 1970. Residues persist in air, soil, water and sediments in lakes and can be detected in residents of industrialized countries. PCB levels are unusually high in sports fish from Lake Michigan and transplacental exposure to PCBs has been documented.

PARTIAL BIOTINIDASE DEFICIENCY

The symptoms, biochemical features and inheritance pattern of partial biotinidase deficiency have been studied at the Departments of Human Genetics and Pediatrics, Medical College of Virginia, Richmond,