

5 to 6% of children have a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts the acquisition and performance of motor skills (APA, 2013). Called Developmental Coordination Disorder or DCD, this disorder is formally recognized by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and World Health Organization. DCD is a serious childhood disorder (Sugden, 2006; Blank, Smits-Engelsman, Polatajko & Wilson, 2012) that frequently co-occurs with language/communication disorders and AD/HD. Although international researchers have studied DCD for about 40 years already, due to multiple factors, this formal mental health condition remains unknown by many.

The impact of DCD starts very early in life, for DCD impacts the acquisition and performance of fine and/or gross motor development and skill proficiency. These physical abilities are the very skills young children need to acquire and employ when engaging in play and leisure activities with peers and other people. Frustrations and early teasing or exclusions felt by these children result in high levels of distress and therefore problems with emotional regulation. The motor deficits also result in reduced physical play experiences, under-developed social awareness, and poor problem solving skills. Many other difficulties arise as children enter school (e.g., learning disorders, low self-worth, low self-esteem, anxiety, and other mental health conditions) (APA, 2013; Blank et al., 2012).

Since DCD remains under-recognized by parents, teachers and members of the medical profession (Wilson, Neil, Kamps & Babcock, 2012), the needs of these children are frequently misunderstood or dismissed in schools (Missiuna, Moll, King, King & Law, 2006).

Given that public awareness about DCD is lacking, and school systems currently appear unknowledgeable about or disinterested in meeting the various needs of students with DCD, a panel discussion was proposed in hopes this would be a way to converse about social and policy initiatives that would bring attention to the multiple needs of individuals with DCD—whether already diagnosed or not. Instead, the program committee of the IPA requested that a poster be created; the poster addressed the current lack social awareness about DCD. Regardless, it was hoped that by exchanging ideas using a discussion forum, shared wisdom might create improved understanding about DCD, increased recognition by medical professionals, and novel education-based program initiatives to better support the needs of these individuals throughout the life span. Suggested topics for discussion were proposed:

1. All university/college programs will offer education and training about DCD and its impact on play, leisure and other areas of development.
2. All school-based professionals/other staff will learn to identify and then meet the play-based and other needs of students with DCD.
3. All government departments will work to understand and fully support the needs of individuals with DCD.

It would seem that policies regarding DCD will need to be initiated again in future conferences.