General Movements Assessment

What is the General Movements Assessment?

The General Movements Assessment, originating with Professor Heinz Prechtl in the 1980s, provides an evaluation of neurological integrity of the young nervous system. It is a quick, non-invasive, qualitative assessment of spontaneous general movement patterns of young infants.

Assessment is based on observation and visual gestalt perception, through the use of a video recording, of an infant in supine without environmental interference. It is a standardised motor-assessment tool for pre-term and term infants up to 5 months post-term.

Although the tool can be utilised as a single assessment in the ‘fidgety’ period, a developmental trajectory and serial observations of GMs are preferred and more accurate. This involves documenting 2 periods of GMs: the ‘writhing’ period from pre-term until 6–9 week post-term age (2 or more recordings) and the ‘fidgety’ period from 9–20 week post-term age (2 recordings recommended between 12–16 weeks post-term age).

A score of normal or abnormal is obtained in both periods with abnormal GMs being further classified into ‘poor repertoire’, ‘cramped synchronised’ or ‘chaotic’ in the ‘writhing’ period; and ‘absent fidgety’ or ‘abnormal fidgety’ in the ‘fidgety’ period.

Abnormal GMs will accurately detect the likely risk of cerebral palsy, whilst a detailed developmental trajectory can indicate likely severity of cerebral palsy.

Scoring is completed by assessors, certified through the General Movements Trust.

General Movements Basic and Advanced training and certification is obtained via attendance at the General Movements Trust approved 3.5 day course, and high performance in summative assessment concluding the course for Basic and Advanced raters.

A manual and demonstration video are also available.

5. General Movements Trust website www.general-movements-trust.info/52/video