

The neurology of poverty

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An intellectual deficit is known to exist in populations where extreme poverty is rife and is thus seen extensively in the lower socio-economic strata of underdeveloped nations. Poverty is a complex entity whose sociological and economic indicators often bear little relevance to the biological agents which can affect the central nervous system. An attempt is made to express poverty in terms of identifiable defects, physiological in nature. Thus adverse socio-economic factors are converted into specific biological entities which, though necessary for adequate development of the brain, are restricted where there is poverty. A number of causative deficiencies, including nutritional, visual, auditory, tactile, vestibular, affective, and other stimuli are postulated. These interact and potentiate one another. Each is capable of an independent action on the brain and examples are given of some sensory deprivations as well as malnutrition and their possible mechanism of action. If the various