Characteristics and Risk Factors Associated with Dyslexia

Preschool

- Delay in learning to talk
- Difficulty with rhyming
- Difficulty pronouncing words (e.g., 'pusgetti' for 'spaghetti', 'mawn lower' for 'lawn mower')
- Poor auditory memory for nursery rhymes and chants
- Difficulty adding new vocabulary words
- Inability to recall the right word (word retrieval)
- Trouble learning and naming letters and numbers and remembering the letters in their name
- Aversion to print (e.g., doesn't enjoy following along if a book is read aloud)

Kindergarten and First Grade

- Difficulty breaking words into smaller parts or syllables (e.g., 'baseball' → 'base' 'ball')
- Difficulty identifying and manipulating sounds in syllables (e.g., 'man' sounded out as /m/ /■/ /n/)
- Difficulty remembering the names of letters and recalling their corresponding sounds
- Difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation)
- Difficulty spelling words phonetically or remembering letter sequences in common words (e.g., 'sed' for 'said')

Second Grade and Third Grade

- Difficulty recognizing common sight words (e.g., 'to', 'said', 'been')
- Difficulty decoding single words
- Difficulty recalling correct sounds for letters and letter patterns
- Difficulty connecting speech sounds with appropriate letter combinations (e.g., 'after' spelled 'eftr')
- Difficulty reading fluently (slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words using phonics knowledge
- Reliance on picture clues or guessing at words
- Difficulty with written expression

Fourth Grade through Sixth Grade

- Difficulty reading aloud (fear of reading aloud in front of classmates)
- Avoidance of reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty reading fluently (slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using phonics
- Use of less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell (e.g., 'big' instead of 'enormous')
- Reliance on listening rather than reading for comprehension
- Acquisition of less vocabulary due to reduced independent reading

Middle School and High School

- Difficulty with the volume of reading and written work
- Frustration with time and energy required for reading
- Difficulty reading fluently (slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words using phonics
- Difficulty with written assignments
- Tendency to avoid reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty learning a foreign language

Postsecondary

- Difficulty pronouncing names of people and places or parts of words
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places
- Difficulty with word retrieval and spoken vocabulary
- Difficulty completing reading demands for multiple courses
- Difficulty with note taking and written production
- Difficulty remembering sequences (e.g., mathematical or scientific formulas)

Since dyslexia is a neurobiological, language-based disability that persists over time and interferes with an individual's learning, it is critical that identification and intervention occur as early as possible.