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The New ADHD Medications

By Jeannine Virtue

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Pharmaceutical companies vying for Ritalin's hefty market share are coming up with new formulas and aggressive campaign ads to compete in this $1 billion per year ADHD drug industry.
Pharmaceutical companies introduced five new drugs to treat ADHD in the past five years, with another ADHD drug expected on the market in early 2003 and more are being developed.
The relative newcomers Adderall and the drug Concerta are now joined by Metadate CD, Ritalin LA and Focalin. Another formula, Atomoxetine, should hit the market in just a few months.
The new ADHD drugs give people choosing drug therapy wider options. Yet, parents, doctors, the FDA and the DEA alike worry that the unprecedented marketing tactics will further drive up demand for ADHD medications, as well as increase drug abuse for these high powered drugs.
Ritalin enjoyed the ADHD corner market for decades. Adderall, with its longer acting formula, jumped in for its share in 1996 and quickly began chiseling at Ritalin's market share. The drug Concerta, a reformulation of Ritalin, followed in 2000. Then, Metadate CD and Focalin appeared. Not willing to lose its share in the market, Ritalin makers began developing new formulas, the first − Ritalin LA − reaching FDA approval in June. In late November the FDA approved Eli Lilly and Company's new ADHD formulation, Strattera (atomoxetine).
New ADHD formulas hitting the market is not all that surprising. After all, the market is wide open and growing. New prescriptions for Attention Deficit Disorder increased almost 40 percent over the past five years. Last year doctors wrote 20 million prescriptions for ADHD medications. More American children are diagnosed with Attention Deficit than in any other country in the world.
Concerta, Adderall, Metadate CD, Ritalin LA, Focalin all high potential for side effects, drug dependency and abuse and are closely related to illegal street drugs. Strattera is different in that this is the first non−stimulant medication.
It is ironic though that every day millions of children line up to the counter for their dose of meds while the person caught in possession of these drugs without a prescription face felony charges. These drugs cannot be good for young minds and young bodies.
Of the less severe side effects, children might lose weight, have problems falling asleep, have decreased appetite, and temporarily grow more slowly while taking ADHD medications.
Other side effects can include cardiac arrhythmia, depression, psychosis, facial tics, liver damage, abuse and addiction. Some doctors also believe that some ADHD medications may also worsen the

symptoms of Tourette's syndrome.
What's worse, ADHD medications do not always work, do not treat the core cause of Attention Deficit Disorder and could have long−term negative effects. Parents need to be clear about the benefits, as well as the potential side effects of ADHD medications.
Still, more than enough doctors willingly diagnose children as Attention Deficit and cut a prescription. More than enough parents willingly place their children on psychotropic drugs. More than enough teachers and school administrators encourage parents to "do the right thing for their child" to make their child more complaint in school.
The more surprising aspect of this wave of new ADHD medications is the aggressive marketing of narcotics straight to the consumer. ADHD drug makers stepped over a 30−year international treaty agreement not to advertise controlled substances that have high potential for abuse last year when they began marketing their magic pills.

These Schedule II controlled substances are of the most addictive and abused drugs that are still legal.
Full−page color advertisement for ADHD medications began splashing across the pages of women's magazines. Metadate CD, Adderall and Concerta ads show smiling children and their proud mothers touting the wonders of such ADHD medications.
Metadate CD, introduced in April, launched ads in nearly a dozen women's magazines this year. The Drug Enforcement Agency sent a cease−and−desist letter to the makers of Metadate CD after the ads appeared yet the pharmaceutical company insisted that it did no wrong.
The DEA closely watches ADHD medication prescriptions and its advertising. ADHD medications are most−stolen prescriptions and the most−abused legal drugs. According to the DEA, the drug thieves, drug dealers and drug abusers are almost always children.
Adderall and Concerta advertisements appeared in September, just in time for the back−to−school children. These companies did not name the product in the ad but listed a toll free number for parents to call if they wanted more information.
Concerta manufacturers also began airing 60−second ads on cable TV channels. For the first time ever, Schedule II drugs found their way to mainstream television marketing.
The public can expect continued advertising as drug makers attempt to convince the public that their medications are better than the rest. Thus far, the makers of Ritalin have not marketed directly to consumers.

Jeannine Virtue is a freelance journalist and mother of an Attention Deficit Disorder son. Visit Virtue's web site at www.add−adhd−help−center.com to learn about effective drug−free alternatives to ADHD medications.

Understanding ADHD

By News Canada

(NC)−−The behavioural disorder Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has been recognized and treated since 1902. However, it is only in the last 20 years or so that research has demonstrated that it is a neurobiological disorder with far−reaching impact on children.

Originally it was believed that ADHD was a condition that children would eventually outgrow. We now understand that ADHD is not caused by poor parenting, poor teachers or schools, or family problems, but due to chemical differences in the brain. It is not surprising, therefore that as many as 60 per cent of children diagnosed with ADHD will continue to have symptoms into adulthood if not properly treated.

Despite increased awareness and identification of the disorder, many children are not provided with optimal treatment that provides continuous symptom relief. It is important to remember that ADHD is a disorder requiring treatment, not a set of behaviours requiring controls. Sub−optimal treatment can have serious consequences for children such as a lack of friends, accidental death, injury, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, criminal activity, and causing marital difficulties for their parents.

Research indicates the greatest improvement in symptoms is seen with a combination of counselling and medical treatment. For many children and their families, ADHD diagnosis provides a welcome explanation for their difficulties and leads to appropriate treatment.

All medications currently approved to treat ADHD belong to a class called stimulants. A number of new investigational ADHD treatments offer great promise and in the future Canadians will have more choice in ADHD treatment.

For more information on ADHD it's important to speak with your doctor.

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