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What is ADHD?

By Jeannine Virtue

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It seems that the "What is ADHD" question is not very easy to answer, despite the plethora of studies, research and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity testing over the past decades.

In asking the question, "What is ADHD," it is easier to answer by describing what ADHD is not. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder testing and research has not proven that ADHD is a medical condition. There is no concrete research that supports that Attention Deficit and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a genuine disorder or a disease.

What we do know is that Attention Deficit Disorder and ADHD is becoming a modern day American plague. It is the fastest growing diagnosis given to children and teens, often based on subjective Attention Deficit Disorder Hyperactivity testing of parent ratings and doctor observations.

Doctors use a standard checklist of characteristics when Attention Deficit Hyperactivity testing to make a diagnosis and prescribe a standard course of stimulant drug therapy in the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity.

ADHD symptoms commonly include aggressive behavior, constant activity, easy distractibility, impulsiveness and/or the inability to concentrate. These ADHD symptoms may include fidgeting or constant movement, excessive talking and difficulty participating in "quiet" activities like reading.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder children always seem to be in motion. They dash around, wiggle, squirm, fidget and talk nonstop. They are whirlwinds that leave messes, throw tantrums, start fights and act obstinate.

It's hard to miss ADHD in children but if the parent happens to miss the signs, the child's teacher certainly will make a point of clearly pointing it out to the parent.

What is ADHD?

The most prevalent, and most controversial, treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is drug therapy. The top drugs of choice being Ritalin, Adderall, Dexedrine and Concerta.

Now here's the scary part; These commonly prescribed drugs in the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Attention Deficit Disorder fall in the same drug category (Schedule II) as cocaine, methadone and opium.

Only a decade ago, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder testing and treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder was virtually unheard of.

The 1987 edition of the Webster's Dictionary, touting 50,000 entries and modern definitions, does not even include the word "Hyperactive" or "Hyperactivity." The American Psychiatric Association did not name Attention Deficit as a disorder until 1990.

Young boys, by nature have higher levels of energy than their female counterparts. Boys are diagnosed at a rate three times higher than girls.

When did active, high-spirited, strong-willed and oft times uncooperative kids move from kids being kids to children having a mental disorder? If using ADHD medication sales as a marker, this shift began right about the time the American Psychiatric Association named this set of characteristics as a disorder.

Since 1990, prescriptions for ADHD medications quintupled.

As Attention Deficit Hyperactivity testing and treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder reach all-time highs and continue to climb in this country, other countries around the world seem relatively unaffected by this "disorder." This is America's plague.

This country uses 500% more Ritalin than all the rest of the world combined.

It is rare to find an Asian child undergoing Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder testing, much less receiving treatment. European children are diagnosed at a rate of about 10 percent of their American counterparts.

Either the United States has some pretty hyped up kids or American doctors are over-diagnosing Attention Deficit and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Some people argue that Attention Deficit and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are not disorders at all, but simply personality types. Some people can sit still, pay attention, concentrate on specific tasks and exhibit proficient social skills. Others get fidgety, jump from project to project or just do not fit in the societal "norm."

The argument is that ADHD people are not "sick" and in need of dangerous drug therapy but simply have a different way of dealing with the conventional world.

What is ADHD?

Sure these high-energy and on-the-go kids can be incredibly irritating to teachers, energy draining to parents and general all-around hassles in the grocery store but they are also unique, creative, expressive and full of life. And boy, are they full of life!

Maybe we, as a society, should encourage some of these freethinking traits instead of expecting these children to sit quietly.

After all, had Albert Einstein, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Frank Lloyd Wright, Pablo Picasso, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Edison and Henry David Thoreau grown up in today's society, they likely would have been slapped with the Attention Deficit label and placed on medications to make them conform to societal standards.

Should we stifle the natural enthusiasm and fervor of hyperactive people with drug medications? Would we have the genius of these incredibly unique minds if stifled by altering drugs?

You have to wonder...

In the conventional treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, the goal is short-term, as are

the effects. The goal is to make the child more compliant (usually so they can sit quietly in school) and ADHD medications do work effectively for the majority of children.

However, the price paid for compliant children can be detrimental to the child's mental and physical well being is high.

You want your child to be able to focus, sustain attention and behave calmly and appropriately on his own instead of relying on a pharmaceutical drug to do that for him. We do not want a generation of children to grow up automatically thinking that drugs are the answer.

Treatment should address the root of the problem instead of temporarily masking the symptoms and it should produce lasting changes instead of "fixing" the problem for a couple hours.

A large body of research indicates that environmental factors – nutritionally deficient diets, lead poisoning, food allergies and such – cause ADHD symptoms.

By ruling out environmental toxins, food allergies and other possibly causes and by increasing the body's strength and wellness through sound diet and nutritional supplementation, Attention Deficit problems can be gently and effectively addressed without the use of dangerous medications.

We also believe that ADHD should stand for "Absolutely Delightful, Hardy and Daring" young children that will one day grow into fine adults if raised in an accepting, loving and stable environment.

So what is ADHD? Nothing to be feared, nothing to dreaded, nothing other than a label placed on the societal wild children that need a little extra love and a whole lot of patience.

What is ADHD?

Jeannine Virtue is a freelance journalist and mother of an Attention Deficit Disorder son. To learn about effective alternatives to Ritalin and other ADHD medications, visit

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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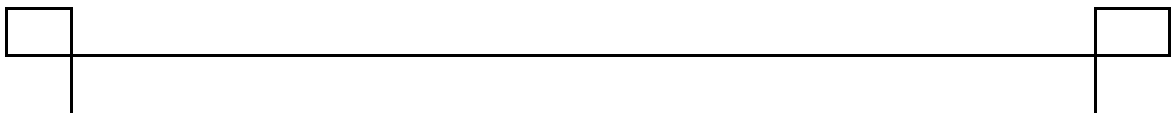
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