

“Pharmatizing” our Children - The ADHD Offensive

By Marcia Lee, Kids Focus 6/28/15

PART 1

A recent article “Fighting to Focus” in the Albuquerque Journal (6/8/15) cited information that I believe was false and potentially dangerous in regard to ADHD and ADHD medication for children. The article was heavily slanted toward Big Pharma’s agenda to turn as many children as it can into patients for life. Based on a diagnosis for a non-existent illness, doctors and mental health professionals are trying to turn childhood into a disease. Unknowingly, American parents are playing Russian roulette with their children’s brains, health, and development.

Profits from the sale of ADHD medications from 2008 - 2013 were \$40 billion and the figure increases daily. In 1990, three million ADHD medications were dispensed for children in the U.S. By 2012, the number exploded to 21 million prescriptions. A child in the U.S. is 6 times more likely to be medicated for ADHD than a child in France, and 60 times more likely than a child in Finland.

Finland ranks #1 in worldwide educational rankings. The U.S. now ranks #17, slipping lower and lower every year (#15 in 2013). Why are Finland’s kids doing a better job of learning and achieving in school than ours, without the so-called “help” of ADHD medication?

The 1996 ADD/ADHD Statement from the Drug Enforcement Administration clearly laid out the dangers of ADHD medication – Ritalin is *potent, addictive and abusable*; prescriptions for methylphenidate (the active ingredient in Ritalin) and amphetamines like Adderall are *over-prescribed, over-marketed and oversold*. Ritalin and other stimulants which share the same properties as cocaine are being used as a *quick-fix, bogus medical practice* which is producing *large profits*; and this constitutes a *potential health threat to many children*.

The DEA Report should have put a stop to what has now become a major ADHD offensive, so why are ADHD diagnoses and prescriptions for children increasing so rapidly in the U.S? In 1997 the FDA ignored its own agency’s recommendations and broke the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances which prohibited the public advertising of controlled substances. This opened the door to Big Pharma to promote the existence of ADHD and the use of medication to unknowing, frightened parents and over-burdened teachers. Direct to Consumer (DTC) advertising budgets for big pharmaceutical companies skyrocketed to \$2.7 - \$5 billion per year.

DTC advertising and other factors have driven ADHD diagnoses in the U.S. from 3% in 1987 to over 11% in 2014, with a little more than twice as many boys labeled ADHD than girls. That means one out of every nine children in a U.S. classroom is now on ADHD medication.

The quick-fix drug solution for challenging behavior in children is a huge money maker. Large pharmaceutical companies pay millions of dollars to researchers, doctors, and parent organizations to endorse ADHD drugs and even promote ADHD medications in schools. Big Pharma is providing more and more funding for research studies that will back their products. Unbiased research is becoming harder to find than the Loch Ness monster.

The DSM - Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - continues to expand the definition of ADHD opening the door to more and more diagnoses and prescriptions for children at ever younger ages. Used by doctors, pharmacies, mental health professionals, and insurance companies, the DSM classifies mental disorders, and ADHD falls under that umbrella. More than half the doctors who authored DSM IV had financial connections to pharmaceutical companies. Medication is the first line of attack (yes, your children are under siege) and healthy, effective, non-medication strategies for ADHD behavior such as movement and parental training techniques are downplayed or virtually ignored.

Thankfully the tide is beginning to turn to protect our children. In an article entitled “The Selling of Attention Deficit Disorder” by Alan Schwarz in the NY Times (12/14/13), Dr. Keith Connors (Duke University), an early advocate of the ADHD diagnosis in children, called the increasing number of ADHD diagnoses “a national disaster of dangerous proportions.” He says the so-called ADHD epidemic is a “concoction to justify the giving out of medication at unprecedented and unjustifiable levels.”

Other famous doctors and researchers agree with Connors. Former DSM Task Force leaders are now exposing the lies that have been promoting ADHD medication for children as young as four. Dr. Robert Spitzer (DSM III) admits there are no biological causes for any of the mental disorders in DSM III including ADHD. Dr. Allen Frances (DSM IV) admitted the DSM cast too wide a net for ADHD allowing too many children to be diagnosed with a disease they did not have. Regarding the DSM, Frances says, “It is not well done. It is not safe. Don’t buy it. Don’t use it. Don’t teach it.” Most kids simply grow out of the behaviors that pediatricians and psychiatrists call ADHD.

Behaviors labeled ADHD such as hyperactivity, distractibility, impulsivity, and difficulty focusing are some of the most universal childhood behaviors all over the world. Basically kids are kids. Many psychosocial factors affect children’s brain and behavioral development. However, the DSM only looks at symptoms, and ignores the causes, which can include trauma, poor educational environments, lack of movement, poor nutrition, lack of sleep, etc. In-depth solutions for ADHD type behavior are simply pushed aside in favor of the medication quick-fix.

PART 2

Current neuroscience sheds the most light on ADHD type behavior in kids. In U.S. classrooms, beginning with preschool, kids are asked to do two things – sit and be silent. Unfortunately preventing kids from moving and talking directly shuts down the

centers in the brain that support learning, focus, and self-regulation. In other words, our classroom model creates the very behavior that the DSM calls ADHD. Then we force kids into a medical straitjacket to mimic the focused behavior we prevented them from developing in the first place! In Finland for every 45 minutes of learning in the classroom, children do 15 minutes of movement. U.S. schools have gone in the opposite direction, stripping out PE and recess, and refusing to let kids move in the classroom.

It's not rocket science – it's brain science! A normal kid's brain is not wired to develop high level cognitive functions and self-regulation until around age 10 through the teenage years. Asking preschoolers to act like they're older just doesn't work – not on earth. When ADHD medications are used to force focus and self-regulation at a young age, the child loses the opportunity to develop the areas of the brain that support more mature behavior and concentration.

ADHD drugs do not cure ADHD because no biological illness or injury exists in the first place. That's why Michael Weisend, neuroscientist at the Mind Research Network, calls ADHD "a garbage bag diagnosis." Ritalin can force anyone to focus, but that doesn't mean a child has ADHD. Fighter pilots use it for focus on combat missions.

Both the FDA and DSM admit that there are no brain scans or blood tests that prove ADHD exists. Brain scans don't work at the brain cell level so their results can't provide accurate information. ADHD drugs cannot heal anything – because there is no physical disease or injury there to heal, just a set of challenging behaviors. Psychiatric medications like Ritalin conceal rather than treat the real causes of children's behavioral difficulties.

The Albuquerque Journal article stated that ADHD medications have a "long, solid safety record" and leave the body within hours – both are blatant lies. ADHD drugs have dozens of mild as well as severe side effects. ADHD drugs immediately limit up to 30% of the blood flow to the brain and disrupt hormones and neurotransmitters at the cellular level during the most critical periods of brain growth in a child's life. No long range testing has been done to see what these medications will do to a child's brain and physical growth later in life even after they stop taking them.

The consequences of the use of ADHD medication on children can be devastating. You only have to look at a young child newly taking Ritalin to recognize the zombie affect, stomach aches, insomnia, mood swings, stunted growth, and lack of appetite at a time when a healthy appetite is essential to a growing brain and body. Children consistently complain that ADHD drugs make them feel sick. So doctors add additional drugs to mask the ill effects of the original medication. Severe "side effects" include depression, aggression and suicide. And every year the recommended age for prescribing ADHD drugs gets younger, in spite of repeated warnings from the FDA that ADHD medication can be dangerous to children's health.

The ADHD label can also be emotionally crippling. Children on ADHD medication tend to believe they have broken brains and that only a pill will allow them to think, focus and self-regulate. On ADHD medication, young kids lose self-confidence and their zest for learning. They believe a pill can do a better job than they can. What happened to self-motivation and building a child's confidence to be the best and brightest they can be?

We have the power to stop these lies and *make the ADHD epidemic disappear overnight.*

As parents, teachers, and counselors, here are just a few powerful strategies you can implement for your children right now to build sharp brains and better behavior:

#1 – Get kids up and moving in American classrooms. Cross-lateral movement is safe and easy and helps balance the brain quickly so that children can eagerly give 2000% in the classroom without being drugged into compliance.

#2 – Just say NO to drugs! Stop medicating children for a bogus disorder called ADHD. Ask a medical professional to help wean your medicated child off the medication safely and carefully. Remember! Ritalin and other ADHD medications are Schedule II controlled narcotics that carry the same serious dangers as cocaine.

#3 – Start asking questions and exploring the causes of a child's struggle to focus and self-regulate. Does your child get enough sleep? Doctors speculate that 25% of behavior labeled ADHD is actually just sleep deprivation. Does your child get nutritious food and lots of protein to build essential brain networks for learning and memory? Does your child have wise restrictions on screen time (i.e., computer, video games, Ipads, smart phones, TV, etc.)? Every hour of screen time can increase the risk of ADHD type behavior by 10%.

#4 – Explore positive behavior management and parenting and teacher training courses that help improve discipline for challenging behaviors and promote a positive relationship between parent, teacher and child.

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