

Pointers For Parents

Scientists: ADHD Is Real, Treatable Medical Condition

(NAPSA)—Parents should set aside any doubts they have about whether attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a genuine medical condition requiring medical treatment.

It most definitely is. That's the message of more than 75 leading doctors and researchers, who recently issued a "consensus statement" on current scientific knowledge of the disorder, whose symptoms include inattention and/or impulsivity. Despite the impression of some that ADHD is a controversial diagnosis, there is no more disagreement among scientists that ADHD is a real and treatable medical condition, say the experts, "than there is over whether smoking causes cancer."

The U.S. Surgeon General, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics all officially recognize ADHD as a genuine disorder.

Led by Dr. Russell Barkley, University of Massachusetts professor of neurology and psychiatry, the ADHD experts were prompted to issue their statement out of concern that public confusion over whether ADHD is a real disorder is leading many parents not to seek treatment for their afflicted children. The experts point out that studies indicate "less than half of those with the disorder are receiving treatment."

Such low treatment rates alarm the experts because the consequences of untreated ADHD can be devastating. According to

Does Your Child Have ADHD?

ADHD symptoms fall into two categories: inattention and impulsivity-hyperactivity. A child who exhibits six or more of the symptoms in either category is likely to be suffering from the disorder and should be evaluated by a doctor.

Symptoms of Inattention

- 1. often ignores details; makes careless mistakes;*
- 2. often has trouble sustaining attention in work or play;*
- 3. often does not seem to listen when directly addressed;*
- 4. often does not follow through on instructions; fails to finish;*
- 5. often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities;*
- 6. often avoids activities that require a sustained mental effort;*
- 7. often loses things he needs;*
- 8. often gets distracted by extraneous noise;*
- 9. is often forgetful in daily activities.*

Symptoms of Hyperactivity-Impulsivity

- 1. often fidgets or squirms;*
- 2. often has to get up from seat;*
- 3. often runs or climbs when he shouldn't;*
- 4. often has difficulty with quiet leisure activities;*
- 5. often "on the go," as if driven by a motor;*
- 6. often talks excessively;*
- 7. often blurts out answers before questions have been completed;*
- 8. often has difficulty waiting his turn;*
- 9. often interrupts or intrudes on others.*

Source: American Psychiatric Association.



the experts, research shows that children with ADHD are more likely than other kids to drop out of school (32 to 40 percent), drop out of college (five to 10 percent), have few or no friends (50 to 70 percent), engage in antisocial activities (40 to 50 percent), and use tobacco or illicit drugs. Children growing up with ADHD are also more likely to experience teen pregnancy (40 percent) and sexually transmitted diseases (16 percent), to speed excessively and have multiple car accidents, and to experience depression (20 to 30 percent) and personality disorders (18 to 25 percent) as adults.

The fact that ADHD is left untreated in so many children is

especially tragic given how safe and effective treatments are today. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a combination of medication and behavior therapy.

Drugs, including methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamines, are by far the most commonly prescribed treatments for ADHD. These drugs work well in 75 to 90 percent of ADHD cases, according to the Surgeon General.

For those children in whom these medications do not work or are not appropriate, there are new, non-stimulant drugs that are in the last stages of development. Parents, teachers and others concerned about ADHD can learn more online at www.additudemag.com.