Ritalin A Drug Of Controversy Essay, Research Paper

RITALIN: A DRUG OF CONTRAVERSY

During the summer of 1999, my daughter was prescribed the medication Ritalin. At first thought, my wife and I were happy knowing our daughter would be able to succeed successfully in her life endeavors. After dealing with many problems in school, from grades kindergarten through 4th grade, we dealt with: behavior problems; attitude problems; and problems of getting along with other kids, just to name a few. During 3rd grade she was even separated from the rest of the class, with her desk being placed in the back of the class, next to the student teachers desk. So there was definitely a reason for joy.

But the joy was short lived after my wife began hearing negative things about the drug. So many bad things it became a concern weather our search in helping Amber was really over. Questions began arising, why is the percentage of children on Ritalin rising so fast? What are the long term effects of the drug? Is Ritalin societies way of dealing with children that are considered different?

Some background regarding Ritalin and the illness it is used to treat may be helpful. METHYLPHENIDATE (Ritalin) is used to treat, ATTENTION DEFICIT-

DISORDER / ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER, in children as well as some adults. This drug is from a family of drugs known as, CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM STIMULANTS.

It is the first drug of choice for children that have a severe concentration of attention problem.

What is A.D.H.D (A.D.D.)? The official definition as it appears in the, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association is:

A.D.H.D. is a disorder order that can include a list of nine specific symptoms of attention and nine symptoms of hyperactivity / impulsivity.

Individuals with A.D.H.D. have been demonstrated to arise in early childhood for most individuals. This disorder is marked by chronic behaviors lasting at least six months with an onset often before seven years of age. At this time, four subtypes of ADHD have been defined. These include the following:

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1) ADHD = Inattentive type is defined by an individual experiencing at least six of the following characteristics:

A Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes.

B – Difficulty sustaining attention.

C does not appear to listen.

D Struggles to follow through on instructions.

E Difficulty with organization.

F Avoids or dislikes requiring sustained mental effort.

G Often loses things necessary for tasks.

H Easily distracted.

I Forgetful in daily activities.

2) ADHD = Hyperactive type is defined by an individual experiencing six of the

following:

A Fidgets with hands of feet or squirms in seat.

B Difficulty remaining seated.

C Runs about or climbs excessively (adults may be limited to subjective restlessness)

D Difficulty engaging in activities quietly.

E Acts as if driven by a motor,

F Talks excessively.

G Blurts out answers before questions have been completed.

H Difficulty waiting in turn taking situations.

I Interrupts or intrudes upon others.

3) ADHD = Combined type is defined by and individual meeting both sets of attention and hyperactive / impulsive criteria.

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4) ADHD = not otherwise specified is defined by an individual who demonstrates some characteristics but an insufficient number of symptoms to reach a full diagnosis. These symptoms, however, disrupt every day life.

(focus page- http://members.aol.com)

Adults suffering from ADHD, are often described as experiencing symptoms very similar to the problems experienced by children. Often restless, easily distracted, struggle to sustain attention, are impulsive and impatient. In the work place they generally do not achieve vocational positions or status commensurate with their siblings or intellectual ability. Also, children and adults who suffer from ADHD exhibit degrees of inattention or hyperactivity / impulsivity that are abnormal for their ages. This usually results in serious social problems, or impairment, of family relationships success at school or work or in other life endeavors.

Other definitions have existed, like that of Attention Deficit disorder, or ADD. These use different labels for the same conditions and can be interchanged with ADHD.

ADHD/ADD are illnesses that affect millions of our children, their families and our society. Though accepted as a disability by our local governments, our preschool and public school systems are not educated nor adept enough to allow those with moderate to severe cases to remain in the least restrictive environment. How they meet the needs of these individuals today will affect society as a whole tomorrow.

Having discussed the background of Ritalin, and what illness it is designed to help, this is where the controversy begins. Having medical practitioners as well as school systems quick to prescribe Ritalin, as most lack the knowledge of what it is these individuals are prescribing.

Some doctors believe the drug is not prescribed enough, as is the case with Dr. Michael Artman of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Boston. He, along with other researchers say commonly prescribed drugs for youths with ADD /ADHD, may be under prescribed because of unfounded fears they may have serious side effects.

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Dr. Artman says, Ritalin may cause young hearts to beat a little faster, but not enough to cause problems. At an annual meeting of the American Heart Association in Dallas Texas, Dr. Artman said, The drug is probably not prescribed enough because of unsubstantiated fears of side effects. He went on to say, About seven deaths have been documented that may have been linked to anti-depressants, but not to Ritalin.

So Dr. Artman s opinion is that Ritalin is a wonderful thing.

(Ritalin, Ritalin, Ritalin-http://www.gurlpages.com/spirit/t.peyton/ritalin.html)

Reports do show that individuals on Ritalin, do concentrate more and do better in school, at least for a while. However, at what cost should we continue to give this drug to our children?

There are several million children on Ritalin, along with other stimulants, so for the purpose of alerting the public to the dangers of stimulant drugs, Peter R. Breggin, M.D. Wrote in his book, Talking Back to Ritalin, how Ritalin and Amphetamine

have almost identical adverse effects on the brain, mind and behavior, including the production of drug-induced behavioral disorders, psychosis, mania, drug abuse, and addiction. He also lists in detail the following problems as a result of Ritalin :

• Ritalin and amphetamine frequently cause the very same problems they are

Supposed to treat inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

• A large percentage of children become robotic, lethargic, depressed or with

Drawn on stimulants.

• Ritalin can cause permanent neurological tics including Tourette s syndrome.

• Ritalin can retard growth in children by disrupting the cycles of growth hormone released by the pituitary gland.

• The recent finding that Ritalin can cause cancer in some animals was not

taken seriously enough by the drug company or the FDA.

• Ritalin routinely caused gross malfunctions in the brain of the child. There is

Research evidence from a few controlled scientific studies that Ritalin

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can cause shrinkage (atrophy) or other permanent physical abnormalities in the brain.

• Withdrawal from Ritalin can cause emotional suffering, including depression,

Exhaustion, and suicide. This can make children seem psychiatrically disturbed and lead mistakenly to increased doses of medication.

• Ritalin is addictive and can become a gateway drug to other addictions. It is a common drug of abuse among children and adults.

DR. Breggin also relates in his book that Ritalin is a fad of America and Canada. That the U.S. used 90% of the world s Ritalin.

CibaGineva Pharmaceuticals (also known as Ciba-Geigy corporation), a division of Novartis, is the manufacturer of Ritalin, and is trying to expand the Ritalin market to Europe and the rest of the world.

Dr.Breggin also talks about long and short term affects, as well as how it works:

• Ritalin works by producing malfunctions in the brain rather than by improving

Brain function. This is the only way it works.

• Short term, Ritalin has no positive effect on a child s psychology or on

academic performance and achievement. This is confirmed by innumerable studies and by many professional reviews of literature.

• Longer term, beyond several weeks, Ritalin has no positive effects on any

aspect of a child s life.

Dr. Breggin talks about other problems that may arise from consumption of Ritalin. He says, Labeling children with ADHD and treating them with Ritalin can keep them out of the armed services, limit their career choices, and stigmatize them for life. It can ruin their own self image, subtly demoralize them, and discourage them from reaching their full potential

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He goes on by stating that there is no solid evidence that ADHD is a genuine disorder or disease of any kind. There is a great deal of research to confirm that environmental problems cause ADHD- like symptoms

( Talking Back to Ritalin, by Peter R. Breggin,M.D.)

(Http://www.breggin.com)

Our society has institutionalized drug abuse among our children. Worse yet, we abuse our children with drugs rather than making the effort to find better ways to meet their needs. In the long run, we are giving our children a very bad lesson that drugs are the answer to emotional problems. We are encouraging a generation of youngsters to grow up relying on psychiatric drugs rather than on themselves and other human resources.

We could argue for days the controversy of Ritalin, whether it is good or harmful. However, as for myself and my wife, we chose to remove our daughter from the drug. Especially learning that an acquaintance was denied any possible of attending the Air Force academy, because he had taken Ritalin prior to age 14.

So in conclusion, ADHD is a controversial diagnosis with little or no scientific or medical basis. It is our opinion, that any parent, teacher, or doctor should feel in good company when dismissing the diagnosis and refusing to apply it to our children.

And as for Amber,

we changed her diet and she s doing fine now.

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