# Overmedicated Children in Today’s Society

The problem of overmedicated children has become one of the most discussed problems in nowadays society, especially in USA. It aroused numerous discussions on this topic with common meaning and specialists’ conclusions confronting each other. There are many various angles of visions on this topic that are observed, and some of them worth careful consideration.

At the beginning it seems necessary to give a definition to a special category of medicines that are used for treatment of hyperactive children in today’s USA medicine. These are the stimulants that influence central nervous system, treating the deficit of attention accompanied with hyperactivity (ADHD). The kids in this condition have problems with concentration, with long-lasting activity and are easily distracted. Sometimes this condition is accompanied with behavioral problems. The stimulants of central nervous system decrease the level of restlessness, help a kid to concentrate attention and improve the general emotional condition. Of course, stimulants are used as a part of the whole medical treatment program; they should be accompanied with certain educational help and psychological consultations. (2)

Despite evident influence of the stimulants on the ADHD, using them is constantly discussed by specialists, because they may cause various side effects in all cases, and especially in treating the kids. The major concern is that the stimulants are prescribed in cases when the kids do not need them, as there are definite mental conditions that have the same symptoms as ADHD. Thus, parents and doctors should carefully consider the profits and risks of such a therapy, before using it. The problem of misdiagnoses and dual diagnoses is discussed in *Misdiagnosis And Dual Diagnoses Of Gifted Children And Adults*, a book delivering a research of the problem, written by specialists in mental and medical health. These authors take one aspect of the problem, describing the difficulty in diagnosing ADHD, when gifted children show the same symptoms without having this condition. The specialists say about the danger to overmedicate gifted children while the curriculum seems dull to them and they cannot concentrate because their sphere of interests and intellectual level is more advanced, compared to their classmates. In this case medicine will kill their skills or they will lose their natural interest to personal development and getting new information. The book also gives strict criteria for determination of ADHD conditions in order to avoid misdiagnoses.

It has been already proved that the stimulants of central nervous system may badly influence the growth of the kids and their behavior. Some specialists insist on sometimes intervals in using the stimulants for better effect and less problems with the kids’ health. The other problems that adults occur using this kind of medicine, are the loss of weight and appetite, sleeplessness, stomach problems. Kid’s body is more sensitive to the influence of the drugs, especially in the period of growth, and the bad effects of the stimulants may become disastrous.

Each year a number of schoolchildren using drugs to treat ADHD is growing. This growth in turn stimulated the growth of public concern that more and more schoolchildren cannot control their attention and emotional condition without medicines.

As it has been mentioned above, common meaning and various social and political organizations confront the growth of using central nervous system stimulants in kids’ health treatment. One of the recent articles in Counterpunch, an online magazine on political issues, comprises the discussion and critics of the governmental policy concerning health issues. The author of the article, Evelyn Pringle, argues a new Program that Bush desires to implement – a special program that will screen the mental health of the nation. This program comprises screening the mental conditions and treating them in social institutions like schools, welfare institutions and the institutions of the justice system. The author of the article insists that this program is directed mainly on enlarging the volume of sales of the companies producing drugs:

“*The truth is, this is nothing but another Bush profiteering scheme to implement a drug treatment program for use in the public institutions that will generate high volume sales of the relatively new, but inadequately tested, high-priced psychiatric drugs. If all goes as planned, the scheme will generate millions of new customers for the drug companies.”(*1)

As an example, the author describes one of such programs implemented in Texas, which resulted to an unlimited access of the drug producing companies to the various institutions that led to an enlargement of the list of medicines to be prescribed. The author also gives some facts of the statistics of drugs usage:

…*sales of anti-psychotics reached $6.4 billion in 2002, making them the fourth-highest-selling class of drugs, behind cholesterol-lowering drugs, ulcer drugs and antidepressants. The number of children on antidepressant medication increased by over 500% between 1999 and 2003. Antidepressants and anti-psychotics now constitute two of the four top classes of drug sales.(1)*

She also states that the companies producing drugs have connections with the President Administration and same of them financed his election company.

The author also discusses the report of Policy Options Subcommittee on Medicaid, stating the necessity of screening the mental conditions of children in welfare organizations and institutions of justice and delivering special measures to prevent possible future problems, such as ADHD, before they occur as these kids have a high risk of getting this condition. Concluding the article, the author criticizes the whole state policy on health problems and expresses opinion that it is the Administration of President and the Government that need the screening program on revealing the mental diseases. This emotional article with numerous accusations, accompanied with real facts is a vivid example of growing public concern on the topic.

One more loud voice against drug treatment in cases with ADHD is the voice of Scientologists – an organization, struggling against psychology in general and drug treatment in particular. The Scientologists state that psychiatry is a crime and terrorism that should disappear. Scientologists have delivered numerous attempts to promote legislation that could restrict using drugs in kid’s treatment, accusing the teachers that that recommend medical treatment for schoolchildren and students. At the same time, the Church of Scientology delivers different programs that present information about bad effects of drugs usage.

The Scientologists created a special commission - the Citizens Commission on Human Rights - that should prevent the violation of human rights, as they see the medical treatment of the hyperactive kids. This organization claims that the psychiatrists cannot be regarded as the doctors, as mental diseases do not exist as medical cases.

From the point of view of legislation, the committee confronts with U.S. Surgeon General. The Committee sees an existing situation as the overmedication of healthy children, while this organization claims that there are a lot of children that suffer from ADHD haven’t been diagnosed and suffer without treatment:

*“where the CCHR sees an epidemic of drugging kids that don't have real problems, the Surgeon General sees millions of kids whose real problems are going undiagnosed and untreated.” (4)*

Inspite of the fact that many observers regard this activity as the part of church’s battle for ruling the society, Scientologists’ attempts to prevent enlarging the volume of kids’ drug treatment which may result in disastrous effects in future, are the part of the public concern that grows each year. This problem seems to increase future arguing, which may result in opposition between public and specialists in medicine.

## Works Cited

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