



An Alternative to Ritalin

Homeopathy as a Highly Effective Treatment for ADD

One Diagnosis or Many?

The epidemic proportions of the ADD diagnosis are gaining widespread attention from parents, educators, physicians, and other healthcare providers. Many people are seriously questioning the possibility of overdiagnosis. This issue was raised in an informative cover article in *Newsweek* magazine.¹¹ ADHD has become Americas No. 1 childhood psychiatric disorder. . . . Since 1990, Dr. Daniel Safer of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine calculates, the number of kids taking Ritalin has grown two and a half times. Among todays 38 million children at the ages of five to fourteen, he reports, 1.3 million take it regularly. Sales of the drug last year alone topped \$350 million. This is, beyond question, an American phenomenon. The rate of Ritalin use in the United States is at least five times higher than in the rest of the world, according to federal studies.

¹¹ Mother s Little Helper, *Newsweek*, March 18, 1996, 5056.

The article continues, For all the success theyve had in treating ADHD, many doctors are convinced that Ritalin is overprescribed. Dr. Peter S. Jensen, chief of the Child and Adolescent Disorders Research Branch of the National Institutes of Mental Health is quoted: I fear that ADHD is suffering from the disease of the month syndrome. Dr. Bruce Epstein, a St. Petersburg, Florida, pediatrician, reports that parents of normal children have asked him to prescribe Ritalin just to improve their childrens grades. When I wont give it to them, they switch doctors.¹²

We applaud Dr. Thomas Armstrongs warning about the current overdiagnosis of ADD in his book *The Myth of the ADD Child*. We have seen a number of children who were high-spirited, extremely imaginative, and so precocious that their parents were unable to keep up with their ceaseless questions and insatiable intellectual appetites. We have also met children who were over-amped, but performed just fine in school. Many of these children have been diagnosed with ADD, even though we feel they fall more into the category of unusual, remarkable, or gifted children. Some youngsters are the victims of rigid, overly strict teachers whose highly structured classroom environments simply do not pace their temperaments and learning styles. Or they have excessively rule-bound parents who do not extend to their children the freedom that they need to thrive and expand their creative talents.

We have also seen a large number of children whose behaviors are very disruptive and disturbing through no fault of teachers. No one can expect a teacher in a classroom of forty active children to cope

¹² Ibid., 52.

happily with the statistical average of 10 percent (four children) in her class with ADD. The amount of extra attention, discipline, and time just trying to keep these children and those around them safe is more than many teachers can handle.

Can we, however, lump all of these children together under one diagnostic category? Can a child who lashes out at his family, peers, and teachers in a violent, destructive manner and has no interest in his schoolwork fit into the same diagnostic group as a sweet, gregarious child who simply cannot pay attention in class? Conventional medicine would say that, based on their scores on standardized ADD tests, both children could indeed have ADD. Homeopathy would say that these are two distinct children whose problems and temperaments are as different as night and day. A homeopath would prescribe very different medicines for the two children, rather than giving them both stimulants.

And what about the many conditions that mimic ADD, such as dyslexia and other learning disabilities, vision and auditory problems, epilepsy, developmental disorders, hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, hypoglycemia, food allergies, lead poisoning, caffeinism, anxiety, depression, and obsessive compulsive disorder, just to name a few? It is essential to understand and differentiate each individual child, not only from the viewpoint of psychological testing, but also to comprehend deeply the physical symptoms, experience, feelings, beliefs, and motivations of each child.

Unlike many other syndromes there is no physical examination or laboratory test that definitely confirms the diagnosis of ADD. While some psychologists and educators use the Conners Rating Scales, others, including

physicians, often base the diagnosis on the subjective reports of parents and teachers. The inconsistency of diagnostic criteria and apparent overdiagnosing in this country has led many to question the diagnosis of ADD. Some educational experts acknowledge that The position that ADHD is not a proven syndrome has many advocates, physicians as well as educators. However, whether or not a syndrome exists, it is clear that many children have difficulty in school because of an inability to attend to tasks. The ideal would be to describe each child's strengths and weaknesses and offer an individualized program.¹³ We would like to take this a step further: Offer an individualized medicine as well as a learning program tailored to the needs of the individual child.

The Homeopathic Approach to ADD

Homeopaths are able to treat ADD effectively in many cases by bringing the individual into balance. Homeopaths treat people with ADD, not the ADD itself. For a homeopath, what needs to be treated is the specific pattern of symptoms which an individual presents. Only the one homeopathic medicine that specifically matches the unique symptoms of the individual will allow the person to live in a functional way.

Each of these individuals included in this book is unique, and it is that uniqueness that leads to the homeopathic prescription in such a different way than

¹³ L. Rebecca Campbell, M.D., and Morris Cohen, Ed.D., Management of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Continuing Dilemma for Physicians and Educators, *Clinical Pediatrics*, March, 1990, 29: 1913.

with conventional medicine. Our clinical experience, presented in the case studies in this book, as well as the published experience of other homeopaths, suggests strongly that homeopathy is a useful treatment for ADD. Homeopaths always take the whole person into account. If the chief complaint of the person is his inability to sit still, difficulty concentrating, or other symptoms of ADD, these behaviors would certainly be taken into account, but in combination with all the person's other symptoms. The homeopath would note anything unusual about that person. That might include a history of scarlet fever during childhood, a strong fear of birds, recurrent dreams of falling out of bed at night and no one coming to the rescue, or a craving for persimmons. The homeopath sincerely seeks to understand the uniqueness of the patient.

The Pros of Homeopathic Treatment of ADD

- Treats the whole person at the root of the problem
 - Considered safe, without the side effects of Ritalin and other medications
 - Uses natural, nontoxic medicines
 - Treats each person as an individual
 - Heals physical as well as mental and emotional symptoms
 - Lasts for months or years rather than hours
 - Is inexpensive
 - Is cost-effective
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Why Choose Homeopathy over Conventional Medicine for ADD?

The most common reason patients choose homeopathic treatment is the positive results they have heard from others with similar problems or because they have been referred by another physician or practitioner who is familiar with homeopathic treatment of ADD.

The patient or parents have read about homeopathy, and the philosophy and approach make more sense to them than conventional medicine.

Many adults and parents choose homeopathic treatment because it is safe, nontoxic, and effective.

Conventional medications for ADD act very briefly. A dose of Ritalin, for example, lasts only about four hours. One dose of the correct homeopathic medicine usually lasts at least four to six months.

Homeopathic medicines often result in growth spurts in children and never suppress a child's normal development. Nor do they cause such side effects as tics, appetite suppression, and insomnia.

Homeopathic medicines are very inexpensive. The only significant cost of homeopathic treatment is office visits. Once the person has responded well to the homeopathic medicine, appointments are infrequent. Homeopathy treats the whole person. Not only do learning and behavioral problems improve, so do most or all of the other physical, mental, and emotional complaints of the person. Conventional medication for ADD works only on specific learning and behavioral problems. Sally Smith, a parent of an ADD child formerly on Ritalin, describes this phenomenon by holding up a ruler and pointing to the one-inch mark: Ritalin makes you available to

learn. You and your parents and teachers have to work on all the rest.¹⁴

Homeopathy will not make a child depressed or dull. Parents sometimes complain that, although stimulant and antidepressant medications have eliminated some of the more severe problem behaviors, their children's spirits seem dampened and they do not seem like their former selves.

Homeopathic medicines are generally given infrequently and over limited periods of time. Conventional medications put only a temporary lid on ADD symptoms. Doctors often recommend that these medications be taken for the rest of the patient's life.

What Can I and My Family Expect from Homeopathic Treatment?

Homeopaths have high expectations for their patients. We generally do not consider a homeopathic medicine effective for a patient unless the person's symptoms are at least 50 percent (usually 70 percent or more) improved and this improvement lasts for a year or more. This requires that the patient stay with homeopathic treatment for at least a year. The homeopath keeps a careful record of all of the symptoms and characteristics that were elicited during each interview. As treatment progresses, these symptoms should get better and better. An improvement can usually be noticed within one month, and often within days or weeks.

A patient can expect his energy and overall sense of well-being to improve as well as an improvement in most or all of his mental, emotional, and physical

¹⁴ *Newsweek*, op. cit., p. 56.

complaints. This means, as you will see over and over in the cases that we present in this book, that not only does attention and behavior improve, but headaches, growing pains, constipation, nailbiting, and other symptoms improve after the homeopathic medication has been prescribed.

Can Homeopathic and Conventional Medicines Be Used Together?

This is one of the most common questions we are asked by adults or parents of children who have been diagnosed with ADD. This is ultimately a decision between the patient and the prescribing physician. A general guideline is to assess whether the prescription medication is effective. In cases where the patient sees no improvement from the medication that has already been prescribed, the prescribing physician and patient generally agree to stop the medication and to try homeopathy instead.

In other cases, the medication is working but the side effects are disturbing. With still other patients, the prescription medication is having a positive effect, but the patient or parents do not like the idea of staying on medication and seek a more natural alternative. In these situations, the patient or parents may inform the prescribing physician that they wish to discontinue the medication long enough to try an alternative.

Another category of patients feels that their symptoms of ADD are so severe that they dare not discontinue their medications until they have found another therapy that is effective. In such a case, many homeopaths will prescribe the homeopathic medication in addition to the

prescription drugs the person is already taking. As the homeopathic medicine works and the patient improves, the patient can work with his physician to taper off the prescription medication. This process requires knowledge and experience and is another compelling reason to seek an experienced homeopath.

What If My Doctor Does Not Believe in Homeopathy?

From the time that homeopathic medicine was first brought to this country in the early 1800s, there have been many skeptics among medical doctors. Homeopathic philosophy is very different from what is taught in conventional medical schools. When homeopathy is mentioned in a medical history class, it is generally dismissed as an aberration of the past.

With the growing interest in homeopathic medicine and with the disillusionment about the side effects and short-term benefits of much of modern medical treatment, a growing number of conventional doctors are opening their minds to homeopathy. Some medical doctors are incorporating homeopathy into their conventional practices or referring to other homeopathic practitioners. In our practice, we receive many referrals from medical doctors and osteopaths. Many conventionally trained physicians and other licensed healthcare practitioners have studied homeopathy in the courses that we teach through the International Foundation for Homeopathy. Many physicians, although they may know nothing about homeopathy, encourage their patients, especially children, to use any therapies that are of real benefit to that person rather than, or in combination with, conventional medicines.

If your physician or your child's physician is adamantly opposed to you trying homeopathy and it is your choice to do so, you can try to educate him or her about homeopathic treatment of ADD or you can find a physician who is more supportive of your freedom of choice. Homeopathic practitioners are generally happy to educate conventional physicians about homeopathic philosophy and treatment. Even a skeptical person may be convinced of the possible benefits of homeopathy if he or she reads case studies, attends a homeopathic case conference, or sees the results of successful homeopathic treatment.

Using Homeopathy Along with Other Therapies

Homeopathic medicine is very compatible with many other treatment modalities. Family and individual counseling is often much more effective and proceeds more quickly when one or more family members are under homeopathic treatment. When the whole person is in balance, his mind is generally clearer and he is much more able to move forward in his life.

Therapies such as chiropractic, craniosacral, auditory integration, psychotherapy, and biofeedback are fine to pursue along with homeopathy. Once the correct homeopathic medicine has been given, many patients find that they no longer need to follow strict allergy rotation diets, receive desensitization injections, take megadoses of numerous vitamins and minerals, and use other therapies aimed at treating individual symptoms. It is very understandable that individuals with ADD want to try anything that has the possibility of helping

them, but using too many therapies, conventional or alternative, at the same time can make it very difficult to discern what effect each specific therapy is having. When a person receives the correct homeopathic medicine, she knows it. She feels an improvement in energy, physical ailments, concentration, attitude, and creativity. Once she feels so much better, she generally no longer needs lots of other therapies.

Are There Any Things I Cant Do During Homeopathic Treatment?

There are certain substances and exposures that consistently interfere with homeopathic treatment. Most practitioners will advise you to avoid the following substances: coffee, eucalyptus, camphor, menthol, recreational drugs, and electric blankets. You will be asked to avoid using topical medications such as topical steroids, antibiotics, antifungals, and to use oral antibiotics and cortisone products only after consulting your homeopath, except in cases of emergency. Acupuncture, although a treatment of tremendous value, is not recommended during homeopathic treatment. Nor are other treatments, which are prescribed in order to remove specific symptoms without treating the whole person.

Can Homeopathy Help Me or My Child?

Most people are potential candidates for homeopathic treatment. As with any treatment, you must make a commitment to follow the recommendations of your homeopath. You must be willing to follow these guidelines:

1. You should stay with homeopathic treatment for a minimum of six months to one year before seeking out other therapies.
2. You, as a patient or a parent or family member, need to provide thorough and honest information to the homeopath. The better the homeopath understands the patient, the more likely the best medicine can be found and a lasting cure can result.
3. You need to inform the homeopath of any medications that you or your child is taking. Once there has been improvement with homeopathic treatment, prescription medications for ADD are generally unnecessary. A growing number of conventional physicians are encouraging parents to seek alternative treatment for ADD in hopes that the children will not need to be medicated throughout childhood and sometimes throughout much of their lives.
4. There are a small number of substances and influences, such as coffee and recreational drugs, which are likely to interfere with homeopathic treatment and which you will need to avoid. Homeopathic practitioners will make their own recommendations regarding this matter.
5. You need to come for scheduled appointments and to inform the homeopath of any significant changes in your health during the course of homeopathic treatment. Homeopathic follow-up appointments are generally every six weeks to three months. Once you are doing well, follow-ups are generally scheduled less frequently.

The Limitations of Homeopathic Treatment

Homeopathic treatment is not for everyone. The following are factors that prevent a person from being a good candidate for homeopathic treatment:

1. There are some children, particularly teenagers, who are so opposed to anything their parents recommend that they will sabotage homeopathic treatment, either by refusing to go to appointments or take the medicines or by intentionally using substances that interfere with homeopathic treatment. Similarly, both parents need to be convinced that homeopathy is a valid treatment or willing to try it for at least six months.
2. Some people have such severe behavioral problems that they need to be in an institution, such as a jail or drug or alcohol treatment center, rather than outpatient treatment. We are aware of only one such institutional program, which offered homeopathy as part of a research study and hope others will in the near future.¹⁵
3. Individuals who are unwilling to avoid those substances which interfere with homeopathic treatment, such as coffee or recreational drugs, are not good candidates for homeopathy.
4. Homeopathic medicines may not act as quickly initially as prescription drugs, though the positive effects last much longer. This requires patience and a willingness to stick with the treatment process.

Why Not Treat Yourself or Your Family?

As you read through the cases in this book, you will probably think of someone you know who may have a very similar symptom picture. You may even be tempted to try to find the medicines mentioned in this book and

¹⁵ Garcia-Swain, S. Homeopathy and Drug Abuse: A Review of a Double-blind Trial with 703 Patients, National Center for Homeopathy Conference, May, 1996.

administer them yourselves. Please heed our advice regarding self-treatment.

There are many classes available on prescribing homeopathic medicines for acute illnesses such as colds, flus, and minor infections. We encourage you to take these classes, to read more about acute prescribing, to buy a homeopathic home kit, and to try homeopathic medicines on yourself and your family for minor illnesses. If the person treated does not improve in a day or two, be sure to consult your homeopathic or conventional physician.

The conditions mentioned in this book are not acute conditions. These are chronic states and need to be handled much more carefully. There are over 2,000 homeopathic medicines. It takes years of homeopathic study and practice to make the fine distinctions about when to prescribe which medicine. Although homeopathic medicines do not have long lists of side effects like many conventional medicines, it is also possible to experience a reaction to the medicine. **IN ANY CHRONIC CONDITION, WHETHER PHYSICAL, MENTAL, OR EMOTIONAL, DO NOT TREAT YOURSELF OR YOUR CHILD.** Find an experienced homeopathic practitioner. We have received a number of calls from people who have read our articles on ADD, thought they recognized themselves or their children, and gone out to find the medicine themselves. Invariably they have called us for treatment because they did not select the right medicine or did not know how to administer the medicine at the right frequency or potency. If you were considering brain surgery, you would not read a book or two, buy a set of scalpels, and start cutting. Homeopathy is just as complicated an art as neurosurgery. Just because homeopathic

medicines are widely available does not mean they are easy to use. Please do not experiment on yourself or your family members for ADD. Find an expert.

How Can I Find a Homeopath?

A growing number of health care practitioners, including medical doctors (M.D.), naturopathic physicians (N.D.), osteopathic physicians (D.O.), chiropractors (D.C.), family nurse practitioners (F.N.P.), physicians assistants (P.A.), acupuncturists (L.A., C.A., or O.M.D.), and veterinarians (D.V.M.), practice homeopathic medicine. Most homeopaths have a family practice. We know of no experienced homeopaths in the United States who focus solely on patients with ADD. Since a homeopath always treats the whole person, such specialization is not necessary to find good treatment. What is most important is to find a practitioner who specializes in classical homeopathy, who spends at least an hour with each new patient, prescribes one homeopathic medicine at a time based on a detailed interview rather than a machine, and waits at least five weeks before assessing the progress of the patient. If at all possible, find a homeopath who is board certified. It is not always possible to find a homeopath in your immediate area, or even your state. You will be likely to find much better results, even if you need to travel or do your homeopathic consultations by telephone, than to go to someone in your area who knows some homeopathy, but is not experienced and does not specialize in homeopathy. We treat many patients by phone, though we prefer to do the initial interview in person if at all possible.

In the appendix you can find the names and addresses of organizations that publish directories of homeopathic practitioners in the United States. It is still wise to speak to the practitioner directly to make sure he or she meets the guidelines we have suggested.