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NYU CHILD STUDY CENTER

CHANGING THE FACE OF CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

OCTOBER 2006

This monthly newsletter provides parenting and mental health information, as well as upcoming events and programs by the NYU Child Study Center.

ASK THE EXPERT: ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

Steven M.S. Kurtz, Ph.D., ABPP, Clinical Director of the Institute for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity and Behavior Disorders answers commonly asked questions about ADHD.

Q: Should we tell the teacher our child has ADHD?

A: Parents often ask if they should tell the teacher that their child has ADHD, fearing that the teacher will then have negative behavioral expectations. While parents should be concerned about potential preconceptions and protecting their child's privacy, there are greater disadvantages of not informing the teacher of the diagnosis and treatment plan. While the child's untreated or under-treated difficult behaviors will bias the teacher and peers in negative ways, sharing the diagnosis and fine-tuning the treatment plan assures teachers that parents are on top of the situation and can be counted on to partner in the child's success throughout the year.

Q: With so many different kinds of therapies, how do we know what works and what doesn't?

A: Parents today are bombarded with often exaggerated claims – both positive and negative – about a plethora of treatments for ADHD such as behavior therapy, psychostimulant medications, sand tray therapy, biofeedback, elimination diets, and social skills training. Parents must become well-informed consumers by looking to science to help differentiate treatments with sound research support from those treatments that simply sound good or logical on the surface, but lack enough evidence to support recommending them at present. Several national organizations (www.clinicalchildpsychology.org/) provide online information about how treatments become validated and what to look out for in alternative treatments. They also list the treatments for ADHD that have proven benefits in controlled studies. National advocacy groups such as CHADD (www.chadd.org) also educate consumers and provide excellent annotated references (www.help4adhd.org) to all the major mainstream and alternative treatments for ADHD.

Q: My 6-year-old child just got diagnosed at the end of first grade. Will he ever outgrow it? Is there a cure?

A: ADHD is best understood as chronic and not as a short-term or temporary condition, even with effective treatment. Viewing it this way encourages the child and family, and later the independent adult, to always be re-evaluating how their care plan is working for them and fine-tuning it as needed. ADHD changes over time and manifests differently over the lifespan. For example, while children must have 6 out of the 9 impairing hyperactive or impulsive symptoms to qualify for that part of the diagnosis, very few adults have this many symptoms, yet they still report interference from symptoms and are in need of interventions. Developmentally, we know that the hyperactive and impulsive characteristics actually start to lessen in the early teen years for the typical child with ADHD. Their inattentive and disorganized qualities, however, persist at fairly high rates and if untreated (or under-treated) continue to interfere with accomplishing what they otherwise might.

Q: Why are so many more children being diagnosed with ADHD now compared to when I was a kid? Is it really more prevalent or are people just making excuses for bratty behavior in a society where parents no longer set limits?

A: Estimates of the prevalence of ADHD vastly differ depending on how the study collects the information. The best overall estimate is that between 3-5% of elementary school-aged children have the disorder – on average, about one child per class. Unfortunately, even though the number of children identified with ADHD has increased significantly, there are still so many more children who have the condition and are not being identified or getting appropriate help. The US Surgeon General reports that only one out of five of the 10 million youth with a psychiatric illness is receiving proper diagnosis and treatment. Stigma and limited healthcare coverage still prevent vulnerable children from getting the help they need.

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csc-communications@med.nyu.edu



In addition to our clinical services for children and adolescents, the NYU Child Study Center offers a variety of programs and services for parents, educators and mental health professionals:

- **Parenting Workshops: For Parents of Anxious Children with Tics and Tourette's Disorder**
The goal of this workshop is to teach the parents of children with tics and Tourette's Disorder how to help their children cope effectively in situations that trigger anxiety. For more information, contact Dr. Alexandra Barzvi at (212) 263-5850.
- **Getting a Good Start**
The Parenting Institute at NYU Child Study Center offers free 90-minute seminars for new parents covering the first twelve months of life. Babies are welcome. To register, please contact Jennifer Gelfand at (212) 263-8861.

Current Treatment Studies:

- **Organizational Skills Study**
If your child is restless, inattentive, impulsive and has trouble with organizational, time management, and planning skills, your child may be suffering from Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. The NYU Child Study Center is offering free treatment specifically designed to help children with ADHD improve their ability to organize their materials, time, and school and home activities. For more information, contact Robyn Stotter at (212) 263-2734.
- **Anxiety and Decision-making Study**
Does your child worry too much? Free anxiety evaluations are available for kids ages 8-17 as part of a study of decision-making in youth. Compensation is provided. For more information, contact Kristin Gotimer at (212) 263-0661.
- **Fish Oil Treatment Study**
The NYU Child Study Center is currently recruiting adolescents ages 12-19 with depression for an omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil) treatment study. Study treatments are provided at no cost and assessments include a free diagnostic evaluation. For more information, contact Julia Perault at (212) 263-2494.
- **Parent Training Study**
The NYU Child Study Center is currently recruiting parents of children ages 3-8 to participate in a 10-week research study that is examining the effectiveness of parenting classes. The parenting group will meet once a week for two hours. For more information, contact Dr. Camilo Ortiz at (516) 299-3754.
- **BMS Abilify Study**
Does your child have repetitive movements such as eye blinking, neck rolling, or shoulder shrugging? Does your child make repetitive sounds such as throat clearing, coughing, or sniffing? If so, your child may be eligible for a new treatment study. The NYU Child Study Center is currently evaluating children and adolescents ages 7-18 with tic disorders or Tourette's Disorder to determine if they qualify to participate in the study and receive specialized, professional care at no cost. For more information, contact Natalie Wieland at (212) 263-8992.

Events Calendar

Grand Rounds

Short- and Long-term Outcomes of In-Utero

Exposure to SSRIs

Shaila Misri, M.D., F.R.C.P.C.

When: Friday, October 6, 2006

Where: 550 First Ave., Auditorium Alumni A

Time: 11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Cost: Free

No RSVP necessary

An Evening with Dr. Tony Attwood

Asperger Syndrome: Techniques for Families

Dr. Tony Attwood is a clinical psychologist and author of "The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome"

When: Monday, October 30, 2006

Where: 550 First Ave., Farkas Auditorium

Time: 7:00 pm

Cost: \$35 per person

Call (800) 483-7436 to register

Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Lecture Series

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Jerome Bubrick, Ph.D.

When: Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Where: The Allen-Stevenson School (Assembly Hall)

132 East 78th St. (between Park and Lexington Aves)

Time: 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Cost: Free

Register at www.AboutOurKids.org/rsvp or e-mail nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu

Have you visited AboutOurKids.org today?

AboutOurKids.org is the NYU Child Study Center's online resource for parents, educators, and health professionals. We are continually adding new articles, as well as information about treatment studies, clinical services, training programs, and much more!

www.AboutOurKids.org