

Can't Sit Still Pop a Pill, Part 1

By Patti Johnson

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Our society today is geared towards the quick fix. With the barrage of drug commercials there is a pill for every symptom. If you can't sit still pop a pill. Big Pharma's partnership with government agencies including public education is responsible for the drastic increase of children being put on dangerous drugs.

It's been 25 years since my last opinion piece covering ADHD, ADD and prescription medications like Ritalin and Adderall. I thought I would never write another piece on this specific issue, but things have evolved since 1999. When I learned Illinois Governor Pritzker signed into law a new bill making it mandatory for yearly psychological exams on schoolchildren starting in 3rd grade, I had to write again on this issue.

These yearly psych exams will increase the number of children labelled with learning and behavior disorders and a magic pill will be prescribed to solve it. That magic pill is called Methylphenidate with brand names like Ritalin and Adderall. According to dea.gov, Ritalin and Adderall are classified as Schedule 2 drugs. *"Schedule II drugs, substances, or chemicals are defined as drugs with a high potential for abuse, with use potentially leading to severe psychological or physical dependence. These drugs are also considered dangerous. Some examples of Schedule II drugs are: Vicodin, cocaine, methamphetamine, methadone, hydromorphone (Dilaudid), meperidine (Demerol), oxycodone (OxyContin), fentanyl, Dexedrine, Adderall, and Ritalin,"* Opium and a host of other schedule 2 drugs are on the extended list.[1]

Yep, Ritalin and Adderall rank right up there with cocaine, opium, oxycodone and fentanyl. Ironically, they call our public schools "drug free" zones. Because of these drugs addictive nature Big Pharma is counting on lifetime customers. Cha-ching \$\$\$!

Methylphenidate drugs like Ritalin and Adderall are not only very addictive but can have serious cardiovascular side effects, especially with long-term use. Chronic stimulant use may stress the heart, potentially leading to issues like cardiomyopathy or arrhythmias, increased heart rate and high blood pressure. In an article I read back in 1999 a Medical Examiner said that he autopsied a 14-year-old who had been on Ritalin since the age of six. The 14-yr old had died of a heart attack. The ME said he had the damaged heart of a cocaine addict.[2]

Drugs.com advises that if you are on a Methylphenidate drug *"Call your doctor at once if you have:*

signs of heart problems – chest pain, trouble breathing, feeling like you might pass out;

signs of psychosis – hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not real), new behavior problems, aggression, hostility, paranoia;

signs of circulation problems – numbness, pain, cold feeling, unexplained wounds, or skin color changes (pale, red, or blue appearance) in your fingers or toes;

COMMON methylphenidate side effects may include sweating, increased blood pressure; mood changes, anxiety, feeling nervous or irritable, trouble sleeping;

fast heart rate, pounding heartbeats or fluttering in your chest;

loss of appetite, weight loss;

dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, indigestion; or headache, dizziness.[3]

Back in the 1990's when I was on the Colorado State Board of Education the United States ranked first in the world for labelling school children with ADD and ADHD learning disorders and had the most children on Ritalin. Some schools were bullying parents to put their child on a drug, or the child would not be allowed to attend school. Drug companies gave schools handouts on how to identify, label and drug the children. I received so many complaints from parents that I introduced a resolution to the Colorado State Board of Education which sparked criticism from Big Pharma and their complicit news media buddies.

First a little history on how my quest for truth on this specific issue began... July 4th, 1994, Idaho Springs, Colorado Independence Day Parade... I was walking in a parade holding the hand of my neighbor's six-year-old son. Parents and children that supported my run for a seat on the State Board of Education were walking with us handing out campaign literature. As we walked this precocious child chatted up a storm with me. I was mesmerized because this child was smarter than many adults. After the parade when I dropped him off with his mom, I asked her, "Do you know that you have a little Einstein on your hands." She replied, "That is not what his teacher is telling me. His teacher said that he is failing, and he is disrupting the class. He interrupts her while she is teaching, and he needs to be put on Ritalin." I looked at her and replied, "I don't think he needs a drug. He is a little genius and I think he is 'bored to tears' and needs to be challenged. See if you can bump him up a couple grades. Be sure he gets a lot of exercise to have an outlet for all his energy." Well, the parents took the school's advice and he was put on Ritalin. Years later I bumped into him as a young adult. He told me he hated Ritalin and he refused to take it anymore in middle school. He said it made him feel dull,

foggy, not himself. He is now a successful adult with a good job.

Children are diagnosed with ADD/ADHD using a list of behaviors from the DSM-4 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) There is no blood test or brain scan for these learning disorders. A few example from the list are:

Inattention/ADD qualifiers:

Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, at work, or with other activities...has trouble holding attention on tasks or play activities... does not seem to listen when spoken to directly... does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (e.g., loses focus, side-tracked)... has trouble organizing tasks and activities...avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework), loses things necessary for tasks and activities (e.g. school materials, pencils, books, tools, wallets, keys, paperwork, eyeglasses, mobile telephones), easily distracted, forgetful in daily activities.

Hyperactivity Impulsivity/ADHD qualifiers:

Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet, or squirms in seat... leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected...runs about or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may be limited to feeling restless)...unable to play or take part in leisure activities quietly...often "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor."... talks excessively... blurts out an answer before a question has been completed... has trouble waiting their turn... interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games)
[4]

Sounds to me like many children fit those parameters. (chaching) It is a list of common childhood behaviors. We need to

be taught to sit still and not interrupt. A pill won't teach us that. The drug dulls the active children who think, act and learn outside the box into compliance.

Our little neighborhood genius was probably blurting out the answers before a question was completed. The teacher did not like that! He was an active little boy, a chatterbox, and loved to share what he had learned, which fits other parameters in their diagnostic list. He obviously did not fit "their" mold for so-called "normal" behavior. Back in my day when kids could not sit still we said they had "ants in their pants." He did not have a mental disease that needed to be cured with a dangerous and addictive drug.

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