The ADHD “Epidemic”

- In 2000, The American Academy of Pediatrics stated that ADHD is an epidemic.
- The production of stimulant medications Adderall® and Dexedrine® increased by 4.516%, while the production of Ritalin® increased by 375% from 1993-2001 (U.S.D.E.A., 2003).

- What is the modern decline in medicating children with ADHD due to a mistaken belief that ADHD is a natural part of growing up?

Results

- Stimulant medication sales increased 500% from 1991-99.
- Production of Ritalin® also increased by 375% from 1993-2003.

Neglect Effects on Learning

- **43%** ADHD symptoms
- **27%** non-ADHD symptoms

Neglect Effects on Behavior

- **34%** ADHD symptoms
- **41%** non-ADHD symptoms

Abuse Effects on Learning

- **30%** ADHD symptoms
- **60%** non-ADHD symptoms

Abuse Effects on Behavior

- **45%** ADHD symptoms
- **55%** non-ADHD symptoms

Discussion

- Neglect is commonly described by teachers as looking like ADHD.
- Suggesting that teachers can identify when neglected children are exhibiting ADHD symptoms.

Physical and sexual abuse are described as having both ADHD-type and non-ADHD symptoms.

- Therefore, teachers may be helpful in identifying when abused children are exhibiting ADHD symptoms as a result of their abuse.

- Teachers have key roles in identifying children with ADHD (Snider et al., 2003).
- Some teachers make direct treatment referrals for ADHD based on children's academic performance and classroom behaviors (Snider et al., 2003).
- The present study documents that when children are maltreated, teachers describe students' behavior and learning as exhibiting many of the symptoms seen in ADHD.

- Unfortuantly much abuse and particularly neglect is understated in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).
- With the rates of abuse and neglect so high, there is a likely probability that the ADHD-type behaviors observed in the classroom are sometimes the result of child abuse and neglect and not actual ADHD.

- This suggests that before children are given an ADHD diagnosis, their home environment should be an important consideration as their classroom behavior or, as a society, risk compounding that maltreatment with further neglect and inappropriate diagnosis.

References

- Snider, B., Busch, & Arowood, 2003. "47% of teachers reported involvement in their students' ADHD diagnoses, and 92% indicated that teachers make the most recommendations for ADHD assessment." (p. 3)
- Snider, B., Busch, & Arowood, 2003. "47% of teachers reported involvement in their students' ADHD diagnoses, and 92% indicated that teachers make the most recommendations for ADHD assessment." (p. 3)

Future Research

- This study suggests that we have a responsibility to investigate whether we are medicating abused and neglected children for misdiagnosed ADHD.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to JG Johnson and Philip Johnson-Reay for an enormous amount of work in creating this on-line survey, and to all the teachers who generously gave their time to participate in this study.

This study was funded in part by the Oregon Foundation Fund for Research on Trauma & Oppression.

Please address correspondence to:

Frederick Cromer
1237 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403