

What If Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein were on Ritalin?

Today, so many children in the United States are being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, and a variety of other learning disorders. In fact, they have become so prevalent in our culture that ADD, ADHD, Autism and Ritalin have become “buzz words” among children and their parents over the past decade.

ADD/ADHD and Autism fall into the same category of disorders known as Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). At one end of the spectrum is ADD/ADHD and at the complete opposite end of the spectrum is severe autism. ADHD refers to a combination of symptoms in which developmentally inappropriate degrees of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity are present. Since it is apparent that not all children have the hyperactivity component, the term ADD is used instead. The behavior exhibited by a child with ADHD is often seen as being disruptive and inappropriate by teachers and parents (years ago this child may have been called the “class clown”) and as a result this child may have difficulty adjusting socially as well. Low intelligence is not a symptom; however, ADD can hamper learning as a result of the inattention, difficulty in following directions, excessive motor activity, etc.

According to recent scientific literature, ADHD is estimated to effect 5-10% of all school-aged children with at least one-third exhibiting these symptoms into their adult life. Males are six to nine times more likely to be diagnosed than females and there does not appear to be an association with any particular social class or race. Many preschool children are often diagnosed because of excessive running or jumping otherwise referred to as normal exuberant behavior of childhood. Haven’t we all thought to ourselves at some point in time “Wow, I wish I had their energy!”?

For decades, researchers have been trying to determine an exact cause for these Pervasive Developmental Disorders and the answer is still under great debate. Apparently, it is a multi-factorial problem and researchers have broken these down into 3 main categories: 1. Physical/structural causes (including things such as birth trauma, head injuries, brain asymmetry, cranial-sacral dysfunction, visual perception problems, and spinal misalignment), 2. Chemical causes (including maternal cigarette smoking, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, heavy metal toxicity, vaccinations, nutritional deficiencies, antibiotic overuse, food and environmental allergies and sensitivities among others), and 3. Psychological causes (such as child abuse, adverse family situations, etc.). The effect of one or more of these factors on children with ADHD may be the reason why recent research using brain scanning technology suggests an underdeveloped area in the region of the brain that controls inhibition.

Yet, as many causes as there might be, there remains no cure. Therefore, the focus of treatment for ADHD is learning how to control the symptoms. When it comes to the medical treatment, the first mode of treatment is usually a stimulant drug such as Ritalin. However, these drugs continue to be a controversial treatment due to the numerous and potentially severe side effects and the possibility of lifelong dependency.

Ritalin is a very dangerous and highly addictive drug and under Federal Law it is classified as a Schedule II controlled substance, the same rating that is given to cocaine, opium, and morphine. Adverse effects according to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* include stunting of growth, depression, insomnia, nervousness, skin rashes, weight loss and loss of appetite, headaches, abdominal pain, blood pressure changes, and even Tourette’s Syndrome (uncontrollable physical and verbal tics). Withdrawal effects, like other narcotics, can be severe and include depression, fatigue, paranoia, irritability, bedwetting and suicide.

Unfortunately, the United States has become labeled “The Ritalin Capital of the World” because our country uses 90% of the world’s Ritalin which is greater than 5 times more than the rest of the world combined. According to Peter Breggin, M.D. the author of *Talking Back to Ritalin*, 900,000 America

children were on Ritalin in 1990 and today those numbers have increased to 4-5 million or more per year. In fact, today, Ritalin is responsible for more street crime than any other drug. Kids sell their Ritalin to other kids so they can then crush it into powder and snort it like cocaine while others cook it and inject it into their bloodstream.

Many current researchers have determined that Ritalin is certainly not a cure for ADHD and, in fact, it is a short-term intervention at best. So, as a result, today more health care professionals recommend a multidisciplinary, multimodal approach for the treatment of ADD/ADHD. Although stimulant drugs are still prescribed, many parents are researching holistic treatments that integrate the connections between the physical, chemical and emotional aspects of their children. Treatments such as pediatric chiropractic care, nutritional therapy, allergy elimination and detoxification, occupational therapy, sensory integration techniques, vision therapy, auditory integration therapy, neurofeedback and even exercise such as yoga have all been reported to help control the symptoms of ADHD.

One might question how these “alternative and natural” treatments can have a significant impact on the lives of children with Pervasive Developmental Disorders, so let’s take a look at two of the commonly used interventions. Firstly, so many of these children have issues with their senses whereby sensory input into the brain is disorganized and considered noxious to the body. Clinically, this is referred to as sensory integration disorders. In other words, these children may have difficulty with taste (perhaps they don’t like certain food textures), touch (the tags in their clothes may irritate them), smell (certain odors may affect them), sound (often they can not tolerate loud noises) and/or visual input (their peripheral and central vision are affected).

According to Dr. Joan Fallon, President of the International Council on Clinical Chiropractic Pediatrics, “chiropractic should be the cornerstone of the sensory integration treatment plan for the PDD child”. Chiropractic treatment focuses on the detection and correction of spinal misalignments, otherwise known as subluxations. The spinal cord and the brain comprise the central nervous system. The spine protects the spinal cord so any stress to the spinal joints can have a direct impact on nervous system function. Eliminating this stress will allow the body to function at a more optimum level and has even been found to improve the function of the immune system. Chiropractors perform gentle adjustments to remove these subluxations. The deep pressure of the chiropractic adjustment along with the beneficial effects upon the nervous system, especially those areas affecting motion, sensation, and proprioception can create profoundly beneficial changes in these children.

Chiropractic theory stresses the notion that all disease in the body is a result of trauma that has occurred to the body, toxins that the body has been exposed to, and thought as in the emotional component of disease. Although this might seem very simplistic in today’s scientific standards, these “3 T’s” have become quite popular as a means of evaluating disease. For example, can trauma from the birth process or injury to a child’s head have an impact on the brain’s development and lead to ADHD or autism? The role of toxicity is definitely being researched in regard to the PDD as in the role of antibiotic overuse, heavy metal toxicity or vaccinations. In fact, a 1994 study by the Developmental Delay Registry found that children who have been on more than 20 courses of antibiotics before the age of 12 were over 50% more likely to suffer developmental delays. Developmentally delayed children were 37% more likely to have three or more bouts of ear infection, 4 times as likely to have adverse reactions to vaccines and twice as likely to have tubes in their ears. Moreover, Kelly Dorfman, the co-founder of this Registry stated “Parents should be put on notice that utilizing antibiotics prophylactically could jeopardize their children’s development and alternative approaches to treating ear infections should be considered”. And, how is the thought component related to these children? Well, many of the children in the PDD spectrum, especially those with autism have a characteristic obsessive compulsive behavior which can keep the children from being able to progress and learn, and may even be disruptive and dangerous.

Treatment strategies for PDD children would not be complete without noting the importance of nutritional therapy. There are many diets that have been noted to help including the Feingold Diet and diets free of gluten, casein, wheat, sugar, and yeast just to name a few. Many of these diets focus on the allergies or sensitivities that these children have to certain foods. According to Dr. Ellen Cutler author of the best selling books *The Food Allergy Cure*, *Winning the War Against Asthma and Allergies*, and *Winning the*

War Against Immune Disorders, ADHD can be the result of almost any food allergy but most commonly seen are allergies to wheat, dairy, corn, yeast, chocolate, cinnamon, peanut butter, sulfites, food coloring, MSG and salicylates. In addition, essential fatty acids form phospholipids which are critical to nervous system development and function. Children with PDD spectrum disorders tend to have lower amounts of essential fatty acids in their systems and they may even have allergies to them.

Dr. Cutler developed The BioSET Allergy Elimination Technique which can permanently eliminate environmental and food allergies based on the principles of energy medicine, immunology, nutrition, enzyme therapy, detoxification and acupressure. BioSET has been extremely successful in helping these children without using invasive means such as medications or allergy shots.

So, what's the bottom line in helping these children? Healthcare is about options and since parents are their children's best advocates they need to be educated about all of their treatment options especially those that do not have adverse effects. .

There is a genius in every child just waiting to get out! Just look back in history and think about some of the most famous inventors and researchers ever known. Did you know that Albert Einstein did not speak until he was 4 years old and did not read until he was 7? He was described by his teachers as "mentally slow, unsociable, and adrift in his foolish dreams" and he was even expelled! Thomas Edison, Sir Isaac Newton, Winston Churchill, Beethoven and many other "geniuses" had difficulty in school. Could you imagine if these individuals were on Ritalin? Where would our world be today if these individuals were not allowed to express themselves and their ideas?

Dr. Risa Sloves is one of 10 Board Certified Pediatric Chiropractors in CT and she practices with her husband, Dr. Mark Joachim, who is the only advanced BioSET practitioner in CT. Should you have any further questions, please contact them at (203) 838-1555 and for further information please refer to www.ctchiropractic.com.