

FAST FACTS

Introduction

At no point in history have we understood so much about attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) and how to treat the disorder as we do today. In fact, since CHADD was founded in 1987, the United States has realized great gains in research about AD/HD, the legal rights for people living with the disorder, and public understanding.

Despite these gains, myths and inaccurate information about AD/HD persist. These popularly-held false beliefs often perpetuated by emotional or unexamined arguments, do more harm than good. They do little to advance our knowledge and do a lot to discourage individuals from seeking help and using effective treatments for AD/HD that have undergone rigorous scientific scrutiny. What follows is information detailing basic information about AD/HD and the organization that advocates for people living with the disorder.

What is CHADD and who funds the organization?

- CHADD stands for Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Founded in 1987, CHADD is the nation's largest family-based organization serving people affected by AD/HD.
- Information about the organization's funding can be found on the CHADD Web site under "About Us." Questions about funding can also be answered by the CHADD communications department (301-306-7070, ext. 128).

What is AD/HD and is it limited to childhood?

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) is recognized by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the American Medical Association (AMA) as a real neurobiological disorder affecting children and adults.
- The disorder is characterized by problems with attention, impulsivity, and over-activity.
- Science recognizes three subtypes of AD/HD: inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive, and combined.
- While AD/HD has long been thought of as a childhood disorder, it is in fact a lifespan disorder that can persist into adolescence and adulthood.
- AD/HD affects between 3-7 percent of school-age children, and between 2-4 percent of adults.

What is the best form of treatment?

- The best in tax payer-funded scientific research shows that a multimodal treatment approach is the most effective way to treat the disorder. This form of treatment

includes medication, behavioral management, educational accommodations, parent and child training and individual and/or family counseling.

Are we over-diagnosing our children?

- While there may be pockets of over-diagnosis, in some cases AD/HD is under-diagnosed and under treated. Studies show that access to diagnosis and treatment of mental illness varies depending on gender, race, and socio-economic status. In fact studies have shown that girls are underserved at a rate three-times lower than boys. Moreover, ethnic minority children are 2 to 2.5 times less likely to be medicated for AD/HD compared to white children.

What should people do if they suspect they have AD/HD or if they think their child has the disorder?

- It is important for individuals to be evaluated by a medical professional and treated as early as possible. Effective treatment includes behavioral management, educational accommodations, parent and child training, individual and/or family counseling, and medication.

What happens if people go untreated for AD/HD?

- Undiagnosed and untreated AD/HD can have devastating consequences. This can include low self-esteem, a higher prevalence for sexually-transmitted diseases, greater risk for auto accidents, social and academic failure, career underachievement and a possible increase in the risk of later anti-social and criminal behavior.

Aren't school officials trying to push medication on parents?

- There is already a federal law that prohibits school officials from requiring that parents medicate their children as a condition for attending school.
- While only medical professionals can diagnose AD/HD, teachers and other school personnel are vital conduits of information for parents about characteristics of behavior and learning in the classroom that could indicate a child needs to be evaluated for AD/HD or other disorders.

What can reporters and policymakers and members of the public do to help?

- It is important that policymakers, reporters and members of the public learn as much as they can by visiting the CHADD Web site: www.chadd.org. Members of the media who need more information can contact the CHADD communications department (301-306-7070, ext. 128) or the public policy department (ext. 109.)