

Letter to the Editor

Congratulations on the recent Special Double Edition devoted to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The articles were excellent. Also, your invitation for practitioner comment is timely.

For some time now, I have been alarmed at the drift of events with the Attention Deficit Disorder phenomenon. I think the time has come for our profession to have a red hot look at the "big picture" before investing energy into learned research on who has really got it, who is likely to get it, etc.

The psychiatric and medical model is warmly embraced by all and sundry. All sorts of factors contribute to maintaining the dominance of this particular way of conceptualising the problem. The psychology profession does its bit too. We are pretty keen to jump on the band-wagon for NH & MRC funds to research Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. We go along with euphemisms like medication instead of using the more accurate description drug therapy. Appropriate caveats are seldom heard.

For me the model is essentially negative and unfriendly. It really has nothing to contribute to the nurturing of children. Furthermore, the application of the model is a cause for considerable concern. Diagnoses are inconsistent. Drugs seem to be the treatment of first choice now and are being used for longer periods. The long-term effects of such intervention are not well established.

My condensed wish list for the psychology profession is threefold:

- 1 Let us examine our ethical obligations. Principle 1a of the APS Code of Professional conduct states, "Psychologists are expected to take cognisance of the foreseeable consequences of their actions and to make every effort to ensure that their services are used appropriately." This raises all sorts of tricky issues if one wishes to be at arm's length from a pretty inadequate model of working with difficult children.
- 2 Some concerted endeavour is needed to re-define the area to focus on factors that actually promote the long-term psychological well-being of children.
- 3 It's about time we did the honourable thing and drew public attention to how scantily clad the emperor really is!

Yours sincerely

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