

# *the* Hyperactive child

*Marysia Kratimenos* explains how the holistic approach of homeopathy can help with severe behavioural problems



**I**n recent years there has been an explosion in the number of cases of hyperactive children and those with attention deficit. Over two million children in America are currently on medication for ADHD, that is one in every 30 children. Ciba Geigy, who manufacture Ritalin, the “drug of choice”, would have us believe that this is due to “heightened awareness”. Some paediatricians totally deny that the condition exists at all and, instead, blame the symptoms on other reasons, such as food sensitivity or environmental factors. The truth is probably a combination of both these extreme views. We are all more aware of behavioural issues with certain children, and the boundaries between children “playing up” and “pathological” behaviour is very blurred.

## **Diagnosis**

Part of the problem is that the guidelines for making the diagnosis of attention deficit

with or without hyperactivity are ill defined and subjective. Some children with the condition are dreamy and “away with the fairies”. Others seem to resemble a juvenile Attila the Hun. And conventional medicine lumps them all together under the umbrella of ADHD!

And their treatment? Ritalin, an amphetamine. Speed. A stimulant to treat over-activity. Inadvertently, the Law of Similars, a fundamental homeopathic principle, has been borrowed by the very doctors who believe it is illogical and unscientific.

To diagnose ADHD doctors use a checklist of symptoms. The more symptoms that are ticked and the longer they have been present, the more likely a diagnosis of ADHD. The symptoms are already deliciously vague, and then one has to consider whether they are “maladaptive and inconsistent with the developmental level”.

The criteria for inattention,

hyperactivity and impulsivity are all listed separately and depending on the score in the three groups one is either labelled as having attention deficit with or without hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour. Most children will avoid, dislike and be reluctant to do their homework, lose things necessary to do the homework and conveniently turn a deaf ear to parents’ entreaties to get on with it, whilst cheerfully working out how to get to the next level in Pokemon. Sound familiar? That combination of behaviour patterns scores four points on the inattention criteria! According to these criteria most of the children I see in the clinic have ADHD to greater or lesser degree and I score full marks! It is little wonder that the condition is being diagnosed so frequently.

There have always been children with challenging behaviour, but the method of treatment and the diagnosis is ever changing. Some of these children are very difficult to

*Some children end up racing round like the cartoon character, Roadrunner*

deal with from a parenting point of view and in my opinion the parents need as much support as the children. I often hear mothers say "It's so hard to love Johnny, I do try but..." and as you watch the little darling demolish the room with the efficiency of a tornado, you are filled with understanding.

Parents have a bad enough time dealing with this sort of behaviour without having someone (who usually has no children) telling them it's all their fault! There are many ways that the parents can improve the situation, once they know how. It should always be born in mind that in the meantime they are doing the best they can in a very difficult situation.

### ***Causes***

No one knows what causes attention deficit and/or hyperactivity. There are numerous theories ranging from it being hereditary to it being a result of the high-speed world in which we live. It is well known that ADHD is more common in single parent families. This may be due to the fact that the hyperactive father cannot sustain a relationship or it could be due to the lack of a suitable male role model for the developing child.

As with most dis-eases the cause is probably due to a variety of factors. Our parents not only provide us with genes, they also show us how to behave in relation to the world. Whether we are aware of it or not we tend to copy our parents.

There are many other role models, some real, others fictional, that will influence a child's development. Bart Simpson is the ultimate parent's nightmare child and

yet children all over the world are glued to the television, fascinated by his antics and copying them to a greater or lesser extent.

Modern life is fast and furious. We have lost the stillness and the tranquillity in the pursuit of a better job and achieving success in a materialistic sense. With women having to work, the decline of the extended family and the sense of community, children are often parked in front of the television or computer for hours on end. They no longer play those imaginative games or escape into a book; there are no outlets for their creativity. School is very competitive in preparation for the big world. Little wonder that some children escape into dream-time instead of completing their maths homework. And others get fired up by all the extraneous stimulation, and end up racing around like the cartoon character, Roadrunner.

Parents often notice that certain foods make their children even more active. Foods and drinks can, and do, act as stimulants. Colourings and preservatives, sugar, fizzy drinks can all increase activity. Many parents dread children's parties as the junk food is guaranteed to bring out the worst in their children. With homeopathic treatment this sensitivity to food often disappears, but it is often useful to avoid the foods until there is significant improvement.

### ***Homeopathic treatment***

Unlike conventional medicine, homeopathy seeks to treat each child as an individual. There is no homeopathic Ritalin. Each child is assessed as the unique person they are. The remedy must reflect everything about the child. A

detailed history is fundamental to the correct choice of remedy. The homeopath will ask about the health of the child and the family, the pregnancy and delivery, early development, vaccinations, life events, schooling, favourite foods, drinks to mention just a few points. The more information gathered, the easier it is to find that tailor-made remedy.

Often apparently trivial information will lead to the remedy. Sometimes a drawing made by the child holds the



key to the cure. I have seen a dreamy child with so-called attention deficit paint beautiful pictures of fairies and mushrooms. The remedy that brought the child back to Earth was *Agaricus muscarius*, the classic toadstool. Another child that responded to *Tarentula* drew UFO's resembling a spider.

In some cases the onset of the behavioural issues dates to a specific life event. Vaccines may lead to sleep disturbances and behavioural difficulties. There has been much reporting of the possible but as yet unproven association between

the MMR vaccine and autism. And what is autism? In my opinion it is the ultimate detachment from "reality". Dreamtime becomes the only world some of these children know. Many of them are truly gifted in a creative way. There are numerous examples of the "idiot savant", the autistic person who can play musical instruments with absolute genius.

Using homeopathy, the adverse effects of vaccines can be overcome, whilst retaining the protection from the

drugs act by suppressing the symptoms. One common complaint is that the children feel and act doped-up, and they lose the good side of their hyperactivity. There is a positive side, which we aim to retain with homeopathy. It is as important to nurture the creative spirit, the imagination, the energy, and the curiosity that these children often show as it is to remove the unacceptable behaviour patterns. So many of these children have wonderful gifts. Homeopathic

these reasons, I feel it is well worth taking time to explore other possibilities.

Looking at diet, lifestyle, environment and family dynamics can well be extremely beneficial. Psychological support is essential for both child and parent(s), whether this is in a formal context such as Behavioural Therapy or Neuro-Linguistic Training, or informally with a support group.

Homeopathy offers a safe gentle healing, and may be combined with other therapies and treatments. I have often used it even when the child is on Ritalin. As the child improves, the dose of Ritalin can be lowered and gradually withdrawn, with the knowledge and consent of the other health practitioners involved.

Two excellent books on the market can provide additional information on the subject. Dr Christopher Green of *Toddler Taming* fame has written a useful book *Understanding ADHD – A parent's guide to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children*. Dr Green does come out in favour of Ritalin, but if you keep an open mind on that subject there is a lot of wisdom and humour in the book. *Ritalin Free Kids* by Judyth Reichenberg Ullman and Robert Ullman gives a deep insight into the homeopathic treatment and is very highly recommended.

Homeopathy provides a safe, effective method of treating behavioural problems in both adults and children. It may be combined with other treatments as needed. The change brought about can be dramatic and brings benefit to the child, parents, family, school and social group.

*The BHA has a fact sheet setting out the issues around immunisation. If you would like a copy please ring 020 7566 7800.*

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infectious disease. Ideally, I prefer to prepare the child for vaccination with a remedy and to space out the vaccines. Injecting a two month-old baby with polio, tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria, HIB, and now meningitis C germs, albeit in a modified form, is a huge strain on an immature immune system.

Homeopathy considers every factor, from the genetic component to specific possible causes. The aim of treatment is to stimulate healing at the deepest level, and to allow a gentle return to health. Ritalin and related

treatment balances these qualities, so that the child can fulfil his or her true potential.

Ritalin does not allow that to happen. Being a chemical drug it is subject to many side effects. Many children experience headaches, stomach aches, high blood pressure, drowsiness and blurred vision. It has to be taken every four hours, and when the drug is wearing off the children often become even more unmanageable. The Food and Drug Administration has shown that in animal studies Ritalin causes liver cancer. For all