

It's About Your Patients

Donald M. Petersen Jr., BS, HCD(hc), FICC(h), Publisher

Children - those cute little people created as gifts from God to remind us of how life should be.

They are born with love, trust and a few basic needs. Most are very healthy and resilient to the bumps and bruises of life. Each child has his or her own personality that clearly demonstrates itself at an early age. Children seek love and attention, and respond in kind.

Sadly, life is not as it should be for many children.

Too many children find themselves in situations in which the people they trust the most - their parents - make decisions for them that may not be in their best interests. Prompted by ignorance, selfishness or other misconceptions, more and more parents are turning to potentially dangerous drugs as a method of managing their children.

As you read through the top story in this issue, "Antidepressants and Children: A Dangerous Combination," an all-too-familiar pattern will become evident:

Drug companies make drugs with serious, often underreported side-effects that may or may not help the condition they were created to address;

- They spend literally billions of dollars on advertising to convince consumers that these drugs will solve their problems;
- They convince medical doctors that it's OK to prescribe them;
- With some drugs, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) reacts suspiciously when asked about their safety.

Researchers are questioning the benefits of these drugs and are very concerned about their potential for harm. And yet, antidepressant use by infants, children and teenagers is increasing at an alarming rate. There is even the possibility that these drugs are contributing to feelings of suicide among children and teens.

And that's not the end of the story.

When you talk to an adult who was put on "mood" drugs as a child, you discover just how damaging these drugs can be. Whether it's antidepressants, Ritalin or something else, the impact is significant and can last well into adulthood:

1. Required to be on constant "medication," children can't help feeling that something's wrong with them.
2. Kids tease them. When other children find out, their often-cruel remarks seem to confirm that there really is something wrong with them.
3. No control over their lives. Children on drugs feel helpless. They don't choose to be on "meds," but they have no way to stop it unless they lie to their parents and just don't take them.
4. Feeling "out of touch" with the world. The drugs can give children a fuzzy feeling that puts them emotionally off-balance.

Parents are usually the ones who make the decisions. For the most part, the doctors don't even talk to the children. Many children are never told about the potential side-effects. Some children think they are "going nuts" because of milder side-effects they were never warned about.

Most MDs willingly join the plot to provide the requested/prescribed drugs, many times violating their oath to "first do no harm." There is really no one to warn parents and make them aware of the potential harm they are doing to their children.

This is where you come in.

Doctors of chiropractic are the most obvious public health advocates among health care providers. Your philosophy dictates that you should be the first one to speak out against the overuse of drugs - particularly when children are involved.

The "Antidepressants and Children" article was written for two reasons: for you to read, and for your patients to read. A printer-friendly copy of the article is available online at:
www.chiroweb.com/forchildren.

Please print out this important article and share it with parents. They need to know the reality so they can protect their children.

DMP Jr.

JUNE 2004