

# Youth Rights UK

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## **For immediate release 25 November 2007.**

Youth Rights UK has launched a campaign to seek a total ban on the prescribing of stimulant drugs to children for 'ADHD'.

We are calling on the the Department of Health to accept the evidence that stimulant drugging of children is not beneficial, has no scientific justification, and is known to have negative 'side-effects' and therefore to ban stimulant drugging of children now.

Dr William Pelham of the University of Buffalo who is one of the principal investigators on the US National Institute of Mental Health multi-modal study into treatment for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has recently been reported by the BBC as saying that:

"I think that we exaggerated the beneficial impact of medication in the first study. [1999] We had thought that children medicated longer would have better outcomes. That didn't happen to be the case. There's no indication that medication's better than nothing in the long run." <sup>1</sup>

This important finding supports other research that stimulant drugging of children has no beneficial effect on academic achievement.

The Department of Health has issued a statement (12/11/2007) saying that stimulant drugs will continue to be prescribed as part of a 'mixed treatment' model. To claim that stimulant drugging of children is acceptable when done along-side behavioural therapy is a fraud. Stimulant drugs have negative 'side-effects' whether delivered alone or as part of a 'mixed treatment'. There is no explanation in either case for how the drugs are supposed to 'work'. There is no reliable evidence that stimulant drugs raise academic achievement whether delivered alone or alongside behaviour therapy. The 'mixed treatment' model is simply the last refuge of those who wish to continue drugging children without being able to offer any solid scientific account of why this might be a good idea.

## **Background Information:**

i) 'ADHD' is a construct of psychiatry. While research has linked inattentive behaviours with biological correlates this is not the same as finding an actual disease. It is rather a process of categorising and dividing. To 'have' ADHD and to 'have' measles are not the same thing. If the diagnosis leads to stigmatisation and unhelpful treatments it should be stopped.

ii) The problems which ADHD describes are educational and behavioural. It is the responsibility of adults to attempt to find educational solutions which take into account each child's needs.

iii) The mechanism by which stimulant drugs such as Ritalin® are supposed to help children are not clearly understood by promoters of the drugs. For example Novartis the company which makes Ritalin® states:

“There is neither specific evidence which clearly establishes the mechanism whereby Ritalin produces its mental and behavioral effects in children, nor conclusive evidence regarding how these effects relate to the condition of the central nervous system.”<sup>2</sup>

iv) Stimulant drugs do potentially cause harm. Side effects associated with Ritalin® use include sleeplessness, nervousness and growth retardation. There is a small risk of cardiac problems in some patients. There is little research into the possible risks of long-term use of stimulant drugs.

## **About Youth Rights UK**

Youth Rights UK is led by a youth worker and is concerned to advocate for the rights of young people. This is a small grass-roots organisation.

## **Notes:**

1. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7090011.stm>

2. [http://www.pharma.us.novartis.com/product/pi/pdf/ritalin\\_ritalin-sr.pdf](http://www.pharma.us.novartis.com/product/pi/pdf/ritalin_ritalin-sr.pdf)