

Preface

ADHD, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, is a syndrome commonly encountered in children and adolescents, and occasionally in adults. It is often associated with learning disabilities, resulting in failure to achieve the expected level of academic performance. At least one child in every classroom and approximately 3–5% of the school-age population is inattentive, hyperactive, or both. The cause is diverse and often undetermined; genetic and environmental factors are invoked. A family member, either parent or sibling, has a history of ADHD in an estimated 80%, and minor anomalies of brain development, premature birth and anoxic injury, infection, and toxic nicotine and lead exposure are some of the presumed causes. A neurological basis for ADHD is supported by reports of MRI evidence of structural brain abnormalities, electroencephalographic dysrhythmias, and subtle signs of immature brain development on neurological examination.

Parents may recognize hyperactive behavior soon after birth or when the child begins to walk, but the diagnosis is frequently delayed until a teacher observes the inability to focus, distractibility, and restless behavior in the classroom. An initial evaluation by the pediatrician or family physician is usually followed by consultations with the pediatric neurologist or psychiatrist, a psychological evaluation, and laboratory investigations when indicated.

Treatment consists of educational accommodations, medications, behavior modification, and family counseling. Central nervous stimulants have a remarkable beneficial effect in 80% of ADHD children, helping them to focus, reducing distractibility and restless behavior, and facilitating learning and memory. Used in conservative doses, as an aid to education, and monitored closely by a physician, stimulant medications are free from serious side effects. Alternative therapies, including diet, and visual and auditory training, may be supportive but rarely have the immediate and measurable effects of pharmacotherapy.

This book is written for the practicing pediatrician, and residents and fellows in pediatrics, pediatric neurology, neurology, and psychiatry. The psychologist, social worker, therapist, the interested teacher and student, and concerned and informed parents should also find the book of value. This *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Handbook* is an expanded professional, updated edition and revision, incorporating advances in the last decade. More than one hundred new references,

many related to causes and treatment of ADHD, are included. Questions most frequently asked by parents and teachers who care for the child with attention deficit and related disorders are addressed. The methods of management and selection of medications are supported when possible by published reports of controlled studies. References are listed for all publications.

The reader should be able to evaluate the current extent of our knowledge of diagnosis, treatment methods, and outcome of children with ADHD. It is hoped that the book will lead to a better understanding of the child with ADHD and improvement in the medical, educational, and psychological management.

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