

Editorial for the month of February 2011

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Homoeopathy.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – ADHD; sometimes known as Attention Deficit Disorder – ADD is a condition that becomes apparent in some children in the preschool and early school years. It is hard for these children to control their behavior and/or pay attention. It is estimated that between 3 and 5 percent of children or approximately 12 million children in the Indian sub continent have met the criteria for diagnosis of ADHD. This means that in a classroom of 25 to 30 children, it is likely that at least one will have ADHD. The condition was first described by Dr. Heinrich Hoffman in 1845 who was a physician who wrote books on medicine and psychiatry. “The Story of Fidgety Philip” a famous childhood story gives an accurate description of a little boy who had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

It was not until 1902, that Sir George F. Still published a series of lectures in the Royal College of Physicians in England in which he described a group of impulsive children with significant behavioral problems. Since then, several thousand scientific papers on the disorder have been published, providing information on its nature, course, causes, impairments, and treatments.

A child with ADHD faces a difficult but not insurmountable task ahead. In order to achieve his or her full potential, he or she should receive help, guidance, and understanding from parents, guidance counselors, and a HOMOEOPATH.

Causes of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

The underlying physiological mechanism behind the causes is still not thoroughly understood and remains under scientific study.

The disorder may be either inherited (70%) or acquired (30%). Recent research in genetics has definitely shown that the condition runs in families. ADHD may be acquired through various conditions that cause insult (damage) to the brain. The use of drugs during pregnancy, smoking during pregnancy, toxemia, infectious diseases, overexposure to radiation, prematurity and complicated delivery are some of the commonly found causes.

Diagnosis of Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder:
In the most current assessment guidelines published by the American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders IV (DSM4), the disorder has several types including: (1) predominantly inattentive; (2) predominantly impulsive or (3) combined. Individuals with this condition usually have many (but not all) of the following symptoms:

Inattention:

- Often fails to finish what he starts
- Doesn't seem to listen
- Easily distracted
- Has difficulty concentrating or paying attention
- Doesn't stick with a play activity

Impulsivity:

- Often acts without thinking & later feels sorry
- Shifts excessively from one activity to another
- Has difficulty organizing work
- Needs a lot of supervision
- Speaks out loud in class
- Doesn't wait to take turns in games or groups

Hyperactivity:

- Runs about or climbs on things excessively
- Can't sit still and is fidgety
- Has difficulty staying in his seat and bothers classmates
- Excessive activity during sleep
- Always on the "go" and acts as if "driven"

Emotional Instability:

- Angry outbursts
- Social loner
- Blames others for problems
- Fights with others quickly
- Very sensitive to criticism

The diagnosis is made by "ruling out" other medical or psychiatric causes for the symptoms and by then determining that the patient meets the DSM4 criteria for ADHD. This diagnosis may coexist with anxiety, depression, Tourette's syndrome, bipolar disorder, conduct disorder and learning disabilities.

ADHD Treatment

Constitutional homoeopathic medicines are far more superior than the commonly used allopathic drugs like Adderall, Concerta, Dexedrine, Focalin, Metadate, Methylin, Ritalin, and Strater. Homoeopathically the practitioner should first of all be acquainted where to search for symptoms in the repertory?

I frequently use the following rubrics mentioned below from the synthesis repertory.

- Mind - Asperger's syndrome

- Mind – Concentration – difficult
- Mind – Concentration – difficult – studying
- Mind – Restlessness – children, in
- Mind – Autism
- Mind – Absentminded
- Mind – Confusion of mind – concentrate the mind, on attempting to
- Mind – Memory – weakness of memory
- Mind – Mistakes; making
- Mind – Thoughts – vanishing of
- Mind – Thoughts – wandering
- Mind – Unobserving
- Mind – Activity – restless
- Mind – Excitement – nervous
- Mind – Impatience
- Mind – Touching – impel to touch – everything
- Extremities – Restlessness
- Extremities – Restlessness – Hands
- Extremities – Restlessness – Fingers
- Generalities – Restlessness

One always has to treat the condition with the help of a constitutional remedy. Let me highlight you with some cases...

The first case is of a child who was a known case of ADHD already taking allopathic drug Ritalin but there was no appreciable improvement. The improvement was only there till the time the drug was on, the moment the dose was tapered the child starts manifesting all the complaints again.

Now let's focus on the symptoms. The most important was the restlessness; constantly doing one thing or another. He would sharpen his pencil every half an hour or he would organize his books in the school bag repeatedly. Many times he would not walk but would prefer crawling on the floor of his own house. He was quite abrupt and rough in his social skills. He made very poor contact with people. He was very

excited and nervous all the time. Many times he behaved very foolishly and would forget things he was asked to do. He also had a problem in his speech; he could not pronounce common simple words and when asked to do things repeatedly by his parents he would become violent.

At the time of birth it was discovered that his brain received little less oxygen as he had swallowed meconium in the uterus of the mother and hence he could not cry immediately after birth. This led to an attack of epilepsy at the age of 3 years where convulsions came and the child had a fever for the very first time. Since then convulsions became a part of his life. He gets twitching of the muscles and then suddenly there are blank spells. He is usually conscious. The attack remains for few seconds only. Occasionally he bites his tongue. After the attack he likes to lie down on the bed for 15-20 minutes. He was on anti-epileptic medicines for years together. The epilepsy became much better and now he gets epilepsy very rarely, may be one attack in a year but at present his behavioral problem really worries his parents.

I examined the child neurologically; nothing abnormal was detected except mild trembling of his lips. I also found that he was quite loquacious in the clinic when his mother was trying to speak something. He had a small appetite and would eat whatever was offered to him.

Studying the symptoms especially those of his epilepsy, his behaviour, his speech, his fruitless activity and his abruptness I was reminded of the remedy Absinthium.

Absinthium is also known as 'common wormwood' and it comes from the compositeae family. I prescribed this remedy in 30C and 200C potency for a period of 6 months where I observed a marked difference in his behaviour. He started getting good scores, fewer complaints from the school teacher, parents were very happy with him now as he

sits on the table and chair. His crawling on the floor has completely disappeared and his concentration has improved a lot. This was my very first case to be honest when I prescribed this remedy and I always thought I would need to support this remedy with another prescription but fortunately even after stopping this remedy when I met his mother she told me that the child is doing extremely fine.

The second case that I remember is of a child who was 6 years old suffering from ADHD. He had multiple educational problems in school and the teacher asked them to see a therapist. The therapist conducted some tests and the child was confirmed as a case of ADHD. He was advised therapy and drugs. Parents were really not very happy introducing allopathic drugs at such a young age; hence they came to my clinic.

The main problem in this case was his antisocial behaviour. The child was quite violent, antisocial and angry. In his anger he would bite or be destructive and even kick somebody. He could be quite malicious if he wanted to and was quite a quarrelsome child. At the same time he was very timid especially in public places, extremely restless and impulsive, would touch everything, had very poor self-confidence and couldn't sit in one place for a few seconds also.

During the mother's pregnancy she suffered immensely because her husband cheated on her and this incident produced a rage of anger in her. This further transformed into silent grief as she couldn't project her feeling as she didn't want to sabotage her relationship with him as she was pregnant and thus insecure. But, this betrayal had a huge impact on her.

While studying the case I also took some symptoms of the mother's totality like anger suppressed and silent grief. I took the symptoms of the child also like his antisocial

behaviour, biting, kicking, timidity, low self confidence, disobedient, defiant, foolish behaviour, malicious, and quarrelsome.

The child had an extremely ravenous appetite, he was constipated and he had strong craving for sweets and sugar. This abnormal and unusual craving for sweets made me think of a remedy *Saccharum officinale*.

This is one remedy I have learnt a lot of while reading some interesting articles by Dr. Tinus Smits. I have used this remedy in multiple behavioural problems in children and here are some leading indications of the remedy:

They are hyperactive and extremely capricious children; they always want nick-nacks, dainties, and sweets but will usually avoid a substantial meal. These are the children who are born out of lack of affection or there is a lot of suppressed anger in the mother at the time of birth or a sense of betrayal, being cheated or silent grief in the mother during the time of pregnancy and labour. Children usually bite their finger nails; suck their fingers till a very advanced age. They are quite jealous, envious and angry children. They are irritable especially when they are hungry. They have an extreme fear of dark or being alone. There is a strong family history of diabetes or cancer.

I prescribed this remedy in 30C, 200C and 1M potencies for a period of 4 to 6 months and found a marked overall improvement in the child's condition.