

FOREWORD

This issue of *Seminars in Speech and Language* focuses on attention deficit disorders (ADD). Like many complex behavioral syndromes, its cause is unknown, but there is growing evidence that a chemical imbalance in the brain, which likely reflects a genetic predisposition in many cases, could be responsible. The diagnosis of ADD is neither simple nor straightforward, either. All other possible causes or explanations for its symptomatic behaviors must be excluded before a diagnosis can be made. Indeed, estimates by the national support group for Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder indicate that about half of the children in the U.S. who have ADD have not been identified.

Children with ADD seem unable to focus or maintain their attention on any activity. They also seem compelled to say or do whatever comes to mind, whatever the situation. Many are also hyperactive, and learning difficulties are common. At one time it was believed that hyperactivity almost always disappeared with age, but current findings suggest that the percentage of ADD children who continue to be restless, fidgety, distractible, and impulsive as adults is close to 50%. Consequently, even the

most conservative estimates of the incidence of ADD in the U.S. indicate that the lives of millions of children and adults are adversely affected.

The behavioral characteristics of ADD have challenged the patience and skills of parents, teachers, and clinicians alike for years. And I can think of no one better qualified or more able to tackle this topic for *Seminars* than Jack Damico of the University of Southwestern Louisiana. As you will see, he has assembled a team of clinically knowledgeable colleagues to help us better understand this challenging disorder, its constellation of defining behaviors, and the learning and interpersonal problems that often result.

This issue of *Seminars* provides a foundation from which to consider the clinical issues that will be discussed in the issue to follow. Together, these two issues explore some of the ways that problems stemming from ADD can be mitigated. The answers this exploration reveals are not simple, but neither are the problems.

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