ADHD ARTICLES

The Selling of Attention Deficit Disorder  The New York Times, December 14, 2013
After more than 50 years leading the fight to legitimize attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Keith Conners could be celebrating. Severely hyperactive and impulsive children, once shunned as bad seeds, are now recognized as having a real neurological problem. Doctors and parents have largely accepted drugs like Adderall and Concerta to temper the traits of classic A.D.H.D., helping youngsters succeed in school and beyond.

But Dr. Conners did not feel triumphant this fall as he addressed a group of fellow A.D.H.D. specialists in Washington. He noted that recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that the diagnosis had been made in 15 percent of high school-age children, and that the number of children on medication for the disorder had soared to 3.5 million from 600,000 in 1990. He questioned the rising rates of diagnosis and called them “a national disaster of dangerous proportions.”

A growing number of doctors who treat the estimated 6.4 million American children diagnosed with A.D.H.D. are hearing that stimulant medications not only help treat the disorder but may actually be good for their patients’ brains. In an interview last spring with Psych Congress Network, an Internet news site for mental health professionals, Dr. Timothy Wilens, chief of child and adolescent psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital, said “we have enough data to say they’re actually neuroprotective.” The pills, he said, help “normalize” the function and structure of brains in children with A.D.H.D., so that, “over years, they turn out to look more like non-A.D.H.D. kids.”

Children with attention-deficit problems improve faster when the first treatment they receive is behavioral — like instruction in basic social skills — than when they start immediately on medication, a new study has found. Beginning with behavioral therapy is also a less expensive option over time, according to a related analysis.

ADHD Diagnosis Linked to Increased Risk of Dying Young  The New York Times, February 25, 2015
People with a diagnosis of attention deficit disorder are at higher risk of dying young than those without the disorder, usually in automobile crashes and other accidents, suggests research reported on Wednesday, from the largest study of A.D.H.D. and mortality to date. The study, an analysis of nearly two million Danish medical records, found that the odds that any individual with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder died young were still very low, about three in 1,000. But those with the disorder often had companion problems — drug abuse, for example, or antisocial behavior — that increased those odds.

The pills were versions of the drug Adderall, an amphetamine-based stimulant prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder that many college students have long used illicitly while studying. Now, experts say, stimulant abuse is graduating into the work force.

Reliable data to quantify how many American workers misuse stimulants does not exist, several experts said. But in interviews, dozens of people in a wide spectrum of professions said they and co-workers misused stimulants like Adderall, Vyvanse and Concerta to improve work performance. Most spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of losing their jobs or access to the medication.
Once seen as a disorder affecting mainly children and young adults, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is increasingly understood to last throughout one’s lifetime.

Video Game May Help Treat ADHD *Medscape*, October 29, 2015
A video game that taps into cognitive functions involved in controlling attention appears to improve symptoms in children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), according to results of an open-label pilot study.

While global diagnoses of A.D.H.D. are on the rise, public understanding of the disorder has not kept pace. Debates about the validity of the diagnosis and the drugs used to treat it — the same that have long polarized Americans — are now playing out from Northern and Eastern Europe to the Middle East and South America.

New research shows that the youngest students in a classroom are more likely to be given diagnoses of attention disorders than the oldest.

Treatment of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Adolescents *JAMA*, May 10, 2016
Although attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is highly prevalent in adolescents and often persists into adulthood, most studies about treatment were performed in children. Less is known about ADHD treatment in adolescents. Evidence supports the use of extended-release methylphenidate and amphetamine formulations, atomoxetine, and extended-release guanfacine to improve symptoms of ADHD in adolescents. Psychosocial treatments incorporating behavior contingency management, motivational enhancement, and academic, organizational, and social skills training techniques were associated with inconsistent effects on ADHD symptoms and greater benefit for academic and organizational skills. Additional treatment studies in adolescents, including combined pharmacological and psychosocial treatments, are needed.

Federal health officials recommend that preschoolers with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder receive psychological counseling before they are put on medication. But states striving to promote the use of behavioral therapy have been hamstrung by a shortage of mental health providers.

It’s Tasty and Easy to Take. And that’s Why a New ADHD Drug Alarms Some Psychiatrists *STAT*, May 23, 2016
There’s a new, candy-flavored amphetamine on the market. Adzenys, as the chewable, fruity medication is called, packs the punch of Adderall and is geared toward children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The drug hit the market last week and is already stirring controversy: Some psychiatrists worry that Adzenys will accelerate a trend toward overmedicating kids — and could be yet another gateway into ADHD drug abuse.

Book review of Alan Schwarz’s ADHD NATION: Children, Doctors, Big Pharma, and the Making of an American Epidemic

Abuse Of ADHD Drugs Following Path Of Opioids *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 10, 2016
Public health officials have focused on the national plague of narcotic painkillers. But another scourge is looming largely unnoticed: The drugs used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in adults. Since 2013, there have been more than 19,000 reports of complications from ADHD drugs, most of which are stimulants like Adderall, made to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, according to a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel/MedPage...
Today analysis. Of those, adults were far more likely than children to suffer severe complications, such as death and hospitalization.

Like many of my friends, I spent years using prescription stimulants to get through school and start my career. Then I tried to get off them.