

Peer calls for ADHD care review

A peer and neuroscientist will call on ministers to examine how attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is diagnosed and treated in the UK.

Independent peer Baroness Susan Greenfield will raise the issue in the House of Lords on Wednesday.

Her intervention follows a BBC Panorama programme which highlighted US research suggesting drugs are no better than therapy for ADHD in the long-term.

There was also evidence that their use may stunt child growth.

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Baroness Susan Greenfield

The Multimodal Treatment Study of Children with ADHD by the University of Buffalo has been monitoring the treatment of 600 children across the US since the 1990s.

Most of the estimated 500,000 children in Britain with ADHD receive no treatment at all.

But of those that do, most - about 55,000 last year - are prescribed stimulants like Ritalin and Concerta.

Wide-ranging inquiry

Baroness Greenfield will call for a wide-ranging inquiry into the huge increase in ADHD diagnoses.

She said: "As well as assessing ADHD drugs themselves, we also need to find out urgently why there has been such a remarkable increase in the numbers of children being diagnosed with ADHD in the last 20 years or so.

"Could the changes to our ways of living be contributing to this increase?"

"The time is ripe for an inquiry exploring the actual causes of ADHD that goes beyond merely evaluating the pros and cons of Ritalin.

"Such an inquiry could consider diverse factors ranging from diet through to screen-based activity and how they may be changing the way both children and adults interact socially.

"Children live a fast-paced, highly interactive, response mode type of existence, and maybe as a result when they go to school they find it harder to sit still."

A Department of Health spokesperson said the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) had advised that drugs should only be used to treat ADHD as part of a comprehensive treatment programme, including behavioural therapy.

"Careful, informed clinical decision-making, involving the parents and child should involve discussion of the benefits versus the risks of all interventions.

"We have also asked NICE to develop a clinical guideline on both the pharmacological and psychological interventions to treat ADHD."

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<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/health/7093944.stm>

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