



Child Health News

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## Parents of kids with ADHD rejoice - it will get better whatever the treatment!

Medical Studies/Trials

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### A new study has welcome news for parents of children who suffer from Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The study which took place over a three year period has found that whether children are treated with medication such as Ritalin or behaviour therapy or both, they all improve over time at an equitable rate.

According to Peter Jensen, director of the Center for the Advancement of Children's Mental Health at Columbia University, the lead author of the study, three years after treatment for ADHD was initiated, children continue to experience improvement in their symptoms regardless of which treatment was used and were doing significantly better than at the start of the study.

Any advantage the medication provided initially suggesting it was superior to other treatments appeared to wear off and the researchers say some improvement in symptoms may occur naturally, independently of treatment.

The study is called the Multimodal Treatment Study of Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (MTA), and first enrolled children with ADHD when they were ages 7 to 10; these reports are the third follow-up on the study.

As many as 2 million children in the U.S. are diagnosed with ADHD, a condition in which children have trouble focusing on tasks, sitting still, and paying attention and it interferes with the learning process.

The original study, which continued for 14 months, evaluated four approaches: behaviour therapy, medication, medication plus behaviour therapy, or routine community care.

After the 14 months, families could choose from treatments available in their communities, and the researchers do acknowledge that the original groups may have added or eliminated the treatments they first took in the study.

The report is a follow-up to the largest long-term controlled research done on those with ADHD and involved 579 children who were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups:- stimulant medication, such as Ritalin; an intensive behaviour therapy program; a combination of medication and behaviour therapy or whatever care their parents could find.

Fourteen months down the line the children given medication alone or medication plus behaviour management were doing much better than those who received just therapy or other care in the community, but the researchers found that ADHD medication's effect appeared to wear off at the three-year mark for some children.

The researchers suggest that some ADHD symptoms may actually subside naturally over time, without treatment; experts call this the "clock-setting cure."

Experts say the finding that, overall, children's ADHD symptoms waned over three years is good news for parents, and parents should be relieved.

Research also revealed that children with ADHD with behavioural problems were more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol and to display delinquent behaviour.

Experts say getting some form of treatment appears to be crucial as the disorder is a chronic disorder, and parents need to remember that.

The research is published in the August issue of the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (JAACAP).

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