

CHADD Launches National Education Campaign to Separate Fact from Fiction

by Peg Nichols



PHOTOS BY LEE AMERSON

Above, CHADD CEO Clarke Ross greets Rep. Jo Ann Davis (VA), the briefing's Republican co-sponsor. Like Ross, Davis is the parent of a child with AD/HD.

TIRE D OF THE “junk science” surrounding depictions of AD/HD, CHADD launched a national education campaign to separate fact from fiction in mid-June. Centered on the theme “Just A.S.K.” (AD/HD. Science. Knowledge.), the AD/HD Education Initiative—led by the CHADD Communications Department—is a comprehensive multi-year campaign created to increase public awareness of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder while simultaneously dispelling common myths and misperceptions.

The Initiative was officially introduced at an educational briefing to members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Co-sponsored by Reps. Jo Ann Davis (R-VA) and Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), the event attracted an unprecedented crowd of 130, a quarter of the House of Representatives.

Rep. Davis, whose youngest son, now 21, was diagnosed with AD/HD when he was in elementary school, emphasized the importance of educating as many people as possible about the disorder. “AD/HD doesn’t just affect the child; it affects and puts a huge strain on the entire family,” said Davis. “Speaking as a mom and parent, I want to say—and I want to say it clearly—AD/HD is a *real* disorder, one that can be safely treated if you intervene early.”

Rep. Kennedy, a longtime mental health advocate, minced no words when he attacked the critics who portray AD/HD as a nonexistent disorder and through fear tactics, add further to the stigma that frequently shroud mental health issues. He applauded the Initiative for its efforts to debunk the myths surrounding AD/HD while also emphasizing the biological underpinnings of the disorder.

“The volume of real science about AD/HD is immense. Unfortunately, junk science and misinformation have increasingly dominated public discussions about AD/HD, causing confusion in the minds of many,” said E. Clarke Ross, D.P.A., chief executive officer of CHADD, who served as program moderator. “By reverting the focus to legitimate science, the AD/HD Education Initiative aims to clear up any confusion surrounding the disorder and works to get people the help they need.”

Members of the distinguished panel included: Evelyn Green, M.S.Ed., CHADD immediate past president, and mother of a child with AD/HD; Perry Green, son of Evelyn Green and a person with AD/HD; Peter Jensen, M.D., director of the Center for the Advancement of Children’s Mental Health, Columbia University Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; Richard K. Nakamura, Ph.D., deputy director, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH); Edward Brann, M.D., M.P.H., division director, Division of Human Development and Disability,



Above, Rep. Patrick Kennedy (RI), the briefing's Democratic co-sponsor explains the reality of AD/HD and the ongoing need to destigmatize mental disorders. CHADD President, Evelyn Green (right), also served as a program speaker.

Below, Over 130 people listen intently as Dr. Richard K. Nakamura, NIMH, presents images illustrating the physiological presence of AD/HD in the brain.

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“Over the last decade we have witnessed substantial advances in our ability to accurately screen, identify and assess children with AD/HD and other significant learning, emotional, and behavioral needs,” said Dr. Jensen, when describing the challenges of treating AD/HD. “Current best practices suggest that multimodal treatment—a blend of medical, psychological and educational interventions and behavior management techniques—has proven to be the most effective method for treating AD/HD and co-occurring conditions.”

Thirteen leading healthcare and education professional organizations and patient advocacy groups joined CHADD as partners for the launch event. They are: the American Association of School Administrators, American Psychiatric Association, Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation, Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders, Learning Disabilities Association of America, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Social Workers, National Center for Learning Disabilities, National Mental Health Association, National Recreation and Park Association, School Social Work Association of America, and the Tourette Syndrome Association, Inc.

Media response to the launch was tremendous, resulting in mentions in *Newsday*, *CBS MarketWatch*, *USAToday.com*, *DallasNews.com*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Dr. Koop*, *Health Day* and numerous mental

health publications. After learning about the campaign, *The Orlando Sentinel* invited CHADD to write a 2,500-word commentary for its Sunday editorial section.

Proactive media outreach is a central component of the campaign. When *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd wrote an insensitive column earlier this summer about adults with AD/HD, CHADD immediately issued a letter from President Mary Durham. Days later, past president Beth Kaplanek and Peter Jensen conducted 18 live television interviews from a studio in New York City, reaching nearly one million viewers with information about the prevalence of AD/HD and CHADD as a resource.

As this article goes to press, we are actively immersed in plans and details for a second education briefing to the U.S. Senate. Co-sponsored by Arlen Specter (R-PA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), the briefing will again feature the nation's top experts, all of whom stand ready to set the record straight on what AD/HD *is* and what it *isn't*.

Many other outreach activities are also in the works. The AD/HD Education Initiative is made possible by unrestricted grants from Eli Lilly and Company, Janssen Pharmaceutica Products, L.P., McNeil Consumer & Specialty Pharmaceuticals, and Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp.

For more information about the AD/HD Education Initiative, please contact Peg Nichols, CHADD director of communications and media relations, or Bryan Goodman, CHADD communications specialist, at 301-306-7070, extensions 102 or 128. ■

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