

# Focus on Medication

Introduction by Mark L. Wolraich, M.D.

**W**HILE THERE unfortunately is no cure for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), decades of study have found that there are two highly effective and very safe forms of treatment: specific behavior management techniques and medication. Two additional components that are equally important are (1) parent and child education about diagnosis and (2) treatment and appropriate school programming and supports. This comprehensive approach is called multimodal treatment—an approach endorsed by CHADD.

For most individuals with AD/HD, medication is an integral part of treatment. Research shows that 70 to 80 percent of children with AD/HD respond positively to psychostimulant medications. And a new, nonstimulant medication—atomoxetine—appears to have similar effects as the stimulants. Other medications that may decrease impulsivity, hyperactivity and aggression include some antidepressants and antihypertensives.

Contrary to some of the sensational statements made about medication for the treatment of AD/HD, it is important to point out that medication is not used to control *behavior*. Rather, it is used to control *symptoms* so that individuals with the condition can function more effectively. Research shows that children and adults who take medication for symptoms of AD/HD usually attribute their successes to themselves, not to the medication.

Perhaps most important, although individuals with AD/HD can lead successful and productive lives, without identification and proper treatment, the condition may have serious consequences, including school failure, family stress and disrup-

tion, depression, problems with relationships, substance abuse, delinquency, risk for accidental injuries and job failure. Early identification and treatment—including medication for the majority—are extremely important.

Medication is a single component of multimodal treatment. This issue of *Attention!*<sup>®</sup> focuses specifically on the topic of medications used to treat AD/HD. While it is not possible to provide all of the information available on AD/HD medications within the constraints of the magazine, we hope we have provided plenty of user-friendly material. ■

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## For More Information...

The choice to use or not use medication—along with the choice of what medication—is an individual decision made between the treating professionals and the family. CHADD does not endorse or comment on individual interventions and products for the treatment of AD/HD. We do, however, carefully monitor developments and news from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding medications used for the treatment of AD/HD and issue statements when warranted. For information about recent FDA activities related to medications for AD/HD, please see the homepage ([www.help4adhd.org](http://www.help4adhd.org)) of the National Resource Center on AD/HD (NRC). Information is located in the box entitled “Latest News.”