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ADD / ADHD and Lead Exposure

On September 19, 2006 the NY Times reported on an extensive study just released by the National Institute of Environmental Health, a branch of the NIH (National Institute of Health). The title of the study is Exposures to Environmental Toxicants and Attention Deficit Disorder in US children. It was estimated that one-third of children who have been diagnosed with ADD may be linked to environmental exposures of toxic substances, such as lead. These exposures may occur via exposures during the mother's pregnancy, as well as exposures after birth. It is crucial to understand that the levels of exposure that may affect these children are with levels of lead that the government considers acceptable. In the statistical analysis that the study did, it was found that a "dose-dependent" relationship existed between lead exposure and ADHD. This means that the study revealed that the problem was increasingly worse in those who were identified as being exposed to a larger amount of the environmental substance at issue. One of the exposures at issue was pre-natal smoking by expectant mothers, giving society just another reason for smokers to quit. This "dose-dependent" relationship was seen for post-natal lead exposure as well.

To those of us interested in the natural treatments of ADD/ADHD and other behavioral problems in children as well as adults, this brings to light the importance that we place on exposure not only of lead, but other substances that may be linked to a whole host of health problems in adults as well as children. It is this focus which causes us to often advise testing for the presence of substances such as lead, mercury, and others in our patients. This is clearly an area which most physicians do not investigate. The health consequences of excessive amounts of environmental toxicants are seen via a wide array of symptoms, behavioral and physical. True health promotion will not come through treating the symptoms without treating the cause. If elevated amounts of toxic substances are found, a program of removal is begun and the health benefits will, hopefully, follow in terms of the reduction of ongoing symptoms, as well as the removal of a health risk of future problems.

In closing, I would like to comment on a related problem not addressed by this study. Exposure to mercury is unquestionably associated with health problems, such that the government has issued warnings about the ingestion of fish (which may contain mercury) by pregnant women. If pregnant women are advised to avoid mercury ingestion

through fish then what is the logic of exposure to mercury through other sources which are commonly accepted. This is the time of year that everyone hears about the flu season which is coming and the generally accepted public health advice to get flu shots. Flu shots are, however, made with Thimerisol a mercury containing preservative. This newsletter is not advising against getting a flu shot, but you should know about this in terms of making the decision to have this done year after year. It is worth mentioning here that because of the concern regarding vaccinations and mercury containing preservatives, manufacturers have been increasingly providing mercury free vaccinations to pediatricians since children are exposed to vaccinations as much as they are, and have relatively tiny bodies which may be adversely affected by these toxic exposures. There are still plenty of mercury containing preservatives still being used. We advise parents to ask their pediatricians about what their supply of vaccinations contains, and avoid the mercury containing vaccinations for their kids. Further avoiding exposure to adults well seems to us in Natural Medicine to be the logical approach. We teach our patients about which fish to avoid (swordfish are known to be among the worst), and we advise testing for the presence of these substances so prevalent in our modern world.

Dr. Sobo is a Medical Doctor practicing Holistic/ Nutritional Medicine in Stamford, CT. More information about natural hormones and about Dr. Sobo's practice can be found on the Internet at <http://drsobo.com>. Dr. Sobo's office phone number is 203-348-8805.

We welcome you to pass this information on to a friend and invite anyone to e-mail us at optimalhealth@optonline.net with their address to be on our e-mail newsletter mailing list.

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