

Do Children Inscribed with 'ADHD' have a Brain Disorder?

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SUMMARY: Contemporary literature is reviewed to determine whether there exists evidence supporting the notion that children inscribed with 'ADHD' have a brain disorder.

KEYWORDS: attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD, brain disorder

'Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder' is portrayed as a neurodevelopmental disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), even though 'no biological marker is diagnostic for ADHD' (p61). The subjective (eg, 'often talks excessively'; p60) and unreliable (Kirk, Gomory, & Cohen, 2013; Reid & Maag, 1994) criteria used to diagnose 'ADHD' has led critics to conclude that it is not a valid medical syndrome (Breggin, 2013) but rather, 'a grouping of socially disapproved behaviors falsely passed off as a disease' (Joseph, 2006, p246). Despite these criticisms, stimulants are being prescribed to millions of diagnosed children (Zuvekas & Vitiello, 2012), in-part, based on the belief that they have a brain disorder (Timimi, 2009).

Neuroimaging technology cannot aid in the diagnosis of 'ADHD' (Castellanos et al, 2002), and has many limitations (Satel & Lilienfeld, 2013; Reeves, Mills, Billick, & Brodie, 2003; Davatzikos, 2004). Moreover, neuroimaging research appears to have provided little justification for framing 'ADHD' as a brain disorder. For example, Baumeister and Hawkins' (2001) review concluded that 'the neuroimaging literature provides no convincing evidence for the existence of abnormality in the brains of persons with ADHD' (p8). Subsequently, it was reported that most

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