



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 March 2007

Psychological intervention – an alternative to drugs in the fight against ADHD

As concerns arise regarding the increasing trend to prescribe drugs for children and adolescents who display evidence of ADHD, the Australian Psychological Society (APS) is urging General Practitioners and parents to consider the benefits of psychological assessment and intervention.

A US study has recently found the use of drugs to treat ADHD had more than tripled worldwide since 1993 and Australia was among the heaviest users of these drugs. It was reported that about 30 per cent of Australian children diagnosed with ADHD were misdiagnosed and one in 100 children were medicated for it. The reason ADHD was often misdiagnosed was through a misunderstanding of the disorder.

"There is little doubt that at times medication is prescribed over-zealously when a child presents with symptoms of concern. Psychological assessment is needed to support a diagnosis that may then benefit by psychological therapy - often without drugs, which may have significant side-effects.," says Amanda Gordon, APS President.

Significant progress has been made in developing reliable and accurate methods for assessing childhood mental illness. Furthermore, psychological programs have been shown to assist children and adolescents to develop skills for managing and overcoming anxiety and depression. These incorporate parent education and training in behaviour management principles to address behavioural problems in young children, and the addition of cognitive behavioural techniques for supporting older children and adolescents.

Clinical practice guidelines recommend parent education and training in behaviour management and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as treatments of choice for children and adolescents because they are supported by evidence from rigorous research. "Treatment for anxiety and depressive disorders in children and adolescents should involve short-term psychological and targeted interventions involving the child, parent and school environment," says Gordon.

"Because of the risk of side effects and misuse, the administration of medication to treat childhood disorders should be rated less favourably than psychological treatments which have been shown to be as effective, and in some instances more effective than drug treatment," according to Gordon.

"Psychologists are trained practitioners in this area and their potential contribution needs to be recognised," Gordon says.

---- ends----

For more information contact:

Elaine Grant
Communications Manager
Australian Psychological Society
03 8662 3300
0412 683 068
www.psychology.org.au