

The C. Everett

Koop Institute

at DARTMOUTH

C. Everett Koop, M.D., Sc.D.

Senior Scholar

December 16, 2002

Linda F. Golodner
President
National Consumers League
1701 K Street, NW
Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Ms. Golodner:

I would like to commend your organization for initiating a public campaign that addresses consumer need for accurate information and guidance regarding one of the most commonly diagnosed behavioral disorders among children - attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) -and add my name to those who have signed the "AD/HD Principles," the keystone of this education campaign.

Throughout my 50-year career as a pediatrician, surgeon and advocate of children's health, I have tried to ensure that sick children and their families have ready access to accurate and reliable medical information and proper treatment, be the illness AIDS or the result of secondhand smoking. Today AD/HD, a legitimate neurobiological disorder, remains misunderstood by many people and even stigmatized. As a result, many children with AD/HD are misdiagnosed, undiagnosed and fail to get appropriate medical help, with serious consequences for themselves and society. Put simply, AD/HD is a medical disorder like any other and should be treated as such. Failure to do so will have saddening consequences for thousands of children.

The facts about AD/HD in the United States are compelling. The National Mental Health Association reports that as many as one in every 20 children have AD/HD-I happen to have a grandson with the disorder. Typically, about one child in every classroom needs help for AD/HD, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Although AD/HD is the most commonly diagnosed behavioral disorder of childhood, fewer children are being treated for AD/HD than suffer from it, according to *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*, published in December 1999.

The costs to children, families and society of not managing AD/HD can be enormous. Considerable scientific effort continues to be applied to this issue. In addition to academic problems and difficulty maintaining relationships, & a child with AD/HD typically lacks the ability to make and keep friends, participate in after-school activities and maintain good family relationships. Studies also indicate that untreated children may suffer higher risk for physical accidents, substance abuse and criminal behavior.

Yet, assaults on AD/HD continue. As parents struggle to make informed choices they have to contend with the painful barriers of stigma and critics who, despite medical consensus to the contrary, cynically attack that notion that AD/HD is a medical condition.

The "AD/HD Principles" embolden us all to overcome those barriers. People affected by AD/HD have the same rights to healthcare, and social, government, and medical support as do sufferers of other disorders. The Principles go far in articulating some of those unalienable rights that extend beyond children and caregivers to educators and health care professionals. I would like to add my name as a co-signatory of the AD/HD Principles and in doing encourage individuals to identify

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their needs, seek assistance from professionals and take seriously their responsibilities in addressing AD/HD.

I wish you continued success in your efforts and offer you additional inspiration from another fellow US Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, who launched the National Action Agenda on Children's Mental Health in January 2001:

"The burden of suffering by children with mental health needs and their families has created a health crisis in this country. Growing numbers of children are suffering needlessly because their emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs are not being met by the very institutions and systems that were created to take care of them."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Everett Koop".

C. Everett Koop, M.D. Sc.D.
C. Everett Koop Institute