



# ALTERNATIVES TO PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT AND THE RIGHT TO INFORMED CONSENT

Real life is busy, often stressful and life's problems can sometimes be overwhelming. Both children and adults can experience emotional or behavioural difficulties, sometimes severe.

During these times of emotional stress, many parents and adults desperately need comprehensive help, which they too often do not receive. A school may be complaining about their child's behaviour in class or a parent observes their child experiencing emotional or educational problems and feel unequipped to help their child. Parents and adults are being told that such behaviour constitutes a "mental disorder" and are being given a psychiatric label, requiring "medication". But all too often at time of prescribing or proposed psychiatric treatment, they are not being given all the facts about this psychiatric label or the potential harm psychiatric drugs can cause to be able to give fully informed consent.

Patients and parents are not always told a diagnosis of mental disorder is not the same as diagnosis of verifiable diseases or medical conditions. A diagnosis of mental illness is based solely on opinion, a simple checklist of behaviours is used. There are no genetic tests, brain scans, X-Ray or any scientifically proven test to verify that mental disorders are actually a disease or the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain, requiring potentially dangerous drugs to "treat" them. Everyone should ask to see the lab test that proves the mental disorder or chemical imbalance of the brain (there isn't one) that would require drug "treatment."

There are many physical and social factors that can cause symptoms of "mental illness" and behavioural issues. The cause of the problem can vary greatly from person to person. Key is to find the cause so the person can be helped with rectifying the cause of the problem.

Fully informed consent would include being told about psychiatric side effect drug warnings. There have been more than 80 psychiatric drug warnings issued by Australia's drug regulatory agency, the Therapeutic Goods Administration including for addiction, hallucinations, heart problems, suicidal behaviour and possible death.



## PRESENTING ALTERNATIVES TO PARENTS:

The 2020 Productivity Commission's Final Report of its Mental Health Inquiry recommended the Australian Government should require that all mental health prescriptions include a clear and prominent statement stating that clinicians should have discussed possible side effects and proposed evidence-based alternatives to psychiatric drugs prior to prescribing. This was proposed to "Start Now" and while other recommendations have been implemented, this vital one that will protect vulnerable children and adults has not been.

Everyone, including parents, has a right to know all the information about proposed psychiatric treatment to be able to give fully informed consent including being told about the non-harmful, non-drug alternatives. Parents and adults should always find the underlying cause of their or their child's problem and never be satisfied with a mere explanation or subjective opinion of symptoms.

## UNDIAGNOSED MEDICAL CONDITIONS

In general medicine, the standard for informed consent includes communicating the nature of the diagnoses, the purpose of a proposed treatment or procedure, the risks and benefits of any proposed treatment, and informing the patient of alternative treatments so they can make an informed, educated choice. All patients should have what is called a "differential diagnosis." This is where the doctor obtains a thorough history of the patient and conducts a complete physical exam, including recommended testing, locating all possible problems that might cause a set of symptoms and explains to the patient any possible side effects of the recommended treatments being made by the doctor.

Psychiatrists routinely do not inform patients of non-drug treatments, nor do they conduct thorough medical examinations to ensure that a person's problem does not stem from an untreated medical condition that is manifesting as a "psychiatric" symptom. And they do not always accurately inform patients of the nature of the diagnoses, which would require informing the patient that psychiatric diagnoses are completely subjective and not based on scientific tests, instead being based on behaviours only.

## DIET, EXERCISE AND SLEEP

Doctors advise a good diet is essential to well-being and health. Poor diet could be a potential cause of problems if nutritious food is not eaten. Doctors also recommend sufficient sleep and exercise as fundamentals for good health.

## TUTORING

If a child is exhibiting unwanted behaviour in class, they may be behind and need tutoring or educational basics. In some cases phonics are not used and children are forced to memorize nearly every word without understanding the logical sequence of letters or their sounds. Consequently, children simply may not understand what they are being told to study or can't read. The use of a dictionary can also assist. Learning problems should be addressed with learning solutions. Some children are also very intelligent and gifted, but faced with a non-stimulating curriculum, are bored, start to fidget and can become a problem. There may also be a lack of interest. The real test is: how much attention can a child give to what they like doing?



## HUMANE CARE

Everyone should be given holistic, humane care that improves their condition. Institutions must be turned into safe havens where children and adults voluntarily seek help for themselves or their child without fear of indefinite incarceration or harmful and terrifying treatment. They need a quiet and safe environment, medical care, good nutrition, rest, exercise and help with life's problems. Such institutions should be fitted with medical diagnostic equipment.

Governments should endorse and fund non-drug treatments as alternatives to potentially dangerous drugs.

**WARNING: No one should stop taking any psychiatric drug without the advice and assistance of a competent medical doctor. Australia's drug regulatory agency has warned that immediately stopping or reducing a psychiatric drug too quickly can cause withdrawal syndrome (worsening of exiting symptoms or new not before experienced symptoms).**

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