



By Herb Newborg, Source: The Australian

## ADHD Drugs Increase Poor School Performance Ten-Fold

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Children diagnosed with ADHD who use prescription drugs to manage their condition are 10 times more likely to perform poorly at school than ADHD kids who avoid medication, a new report reveals.

The report also finds stimulant drugs such as Ritalin and dexamphetamine make no significant difference to the level of depression, self-perception and social functioning of a 14-year-old with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Those consistently using medication had significantly higher blood pressure at age 14 than children who had never taken drugs, a side-effect that could increase the risk of heart attack and stroke even into adulthood.

The report's co-author, Lou Landau, said the world-first study into the long-term effects of stimulant medication on children with ADHD, to be published today, showed "drugs over the long term don't have an impact on improving performance".

"They don't improve outcomes for those with ADHD, they make no difference to levels of depression, social functioning and self-perception, and for those on medication it is 10 times as likely that classroom performance will be below average," he said.

Professor Landau, principal medical adviser to the West Australian Department of Health, which funded the research, said that was not to say drugs should never be used to treat ADHD. "There may be some children for whom the need to manage the condition in the short term will outweigh the long-term effects."

The report is groundbreaking because it uses data from the Raine Study, which has been tracking the progress of more than 2800 families for two decades. Parents of the 131 children diagnosed with ADHD under the study have been providing information since the children were born. The outcomes were measured when the children were 14 years old.

West Australian Mental Health Minister Graham Jacobs said he was cautious about the study because of its relatively small sample size, but it "did call into question the anecdotal evidence from when I was a country GP that medication improved a child's concentration so they learned better".

"I think parents are starting to look at the issue more closely," he said. "In WA, we were one of the higher ADHD medication prescribers, but it started to change in the last 12 to 18 months."

West Australian Labor MP Martin Whitely, a longtime campaigner against ADHD medication, welcomed the report. "The ADHD industry's claim that without medication ADHD children risk academic failure has been shown to be complete bull," he said. "It's not just that ADHD drugs don't improve long-term school performance, they drag kids down. Parents will be furious they've been conned into giving their children taxpayer-subsidized amphetamines. No responsible parent would knowingly increase their child's chances of academic failure."

Many parents find relief from ADHD symptoms though safe, gentle, effective chiropractic care.