

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Really Hyperactive?

Indigenous Scholar Mister Anthony Dillon, with Professor Rhonda Craven and Dr Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews from the Centre for Educational Research, Professor Ian Wilson from the School of Medicine, and Dr Helen Correia from the School of Psychology, is critically analysing the issues and decisions of parents with children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder through a three year ARC Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development Grant.

'Increasingly, Australian children are being medicated for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and ADHD is being seen as a medical explanation for the inattentive and/or hyperactive behaviour of some children, says Mr Dillon. 'This approach is highly contentious, with some parents and health professionals believing that ADHD is a proven medical disorder, while others vehemently oppose this view, and believe responses labelled as ADHD are actually part of the normal spectrum of human behaviours. The increasing use of potentially harmful stimulant medication to deal with children who have been given a diagnosis of ADHD is equally controversial. Despite the ambivalence that surrounds a diagnosis of ADHD, there has been little research about how parents make decisions about accepting or rejecting the diagnosis and subsequent strategies or treatments they apply to deal with their child's behaviour.'

Using surveys and interviews, the research team will gather information from parents who have rejected an ADHD diagnosis and parents who have accepted the diagnosis, in order to compare psychological factors such as attitudes and beliefs about parenting, use of medication, self-concepts of the



two groups, highlighting differences in social factors such as socioeconomic situation, gender, and education level. This information will be analysed to determine whether there are patterns to parents decision-making about how they respond to ADHD-related behaviours.

This project will contribute to improving parents, educators, health professionals and communities' understanding of issues associated with labelling children with an ADHD diagnosis, to ensure that parents are more informed and better able to make decisions that best meet their unique needs.

Project Title: Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder: A critical analysis elucidating constructs that influence parental acceptance/rejection of diagnosis and response
Funding has been set at: \$90,000
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