

This Week's Citation Classic

CC/NUMBER 5
JANUARY 31, 1983

Weiss G, Minde K, Werry J S, Douglas V & Nemeth E. Studies on the hyperactive child. VIII. Five-year follow-up. *Arch. Gen. Psychiat.* 24:409-14, 1971.
[McGill Univ., Montreal; Univ. Illinois, Urbana, IL; and Montreal Children's Hosp., Montreal, Canada]

Sixty-four severely handicapped hyperactive children, most of whom had associated handicaps of the minimal brain dysfunction syndrome, were restudied behaviourally, scholastically, and neurologically five years later at adolescence. While the hyperactivity had diminished, other handicaps, notably social and intrapsychic difficulties, and attentional and learning disorders, persisted. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI®) indicate that this paper has been cited in over 225 publications since 1971.]

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November 23, 1982

"In 1961, John S. Werry (presently professor of psychiatry, Auckland School of Medicine) and I began our residency training at the Montreal Children's Hospital and concurrently launched our first study with hyperactive children. In this, we were strongly encouraged and supported by the director of the department, Taylor Statten, who founded child psychiatry in Canada.

"We chose to study hyperactive children for several reasons. At the time, the etiology of this condition was thought to be brain damage, and we felt that this had never been clearly demonstrated. Children with symptoms of hyperactivity were common in our outpatient clinic and the clinical impression was that they did not benefit as much as did neurotic children from psychotherapy. We felt (naively) that we would be able to clearly define the syndrome operationally, and thus be able to study a fairly homogeneous population. Recognizing that the difficulties of hyperactive children lay not only in behaviour but sometimes also in cognitive functioning—we wanted to look at the effects of psychoactive medication on both of these aspects. Finally, we planned to follow our young patients to determine their outcome. It was one of those fortunate circumstances that Virginia Douglas was at

that time senior psychologist at the Montreal Children's Hospital. She agreed to work with us at the onset of the studies and taught us much of what we learned and applied with respect to research methodology.

"The article cited above was the first publication of several on the follow-up of 100 hyperactive children who had met criteria for inclusion in our study. Before its publication, Klaus Minde had joined our team and participated with his special expertise in the work described in the paper.

"Several factors were probably responsible for the frequent citation of the paper. 1) At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, there was a great deal of interest on the part of parents, teachers, and professionals in 'hyperactivity' in children. Some of this interest resulted from well-designed, controlled studies demonstrating the short-term efficacy of stimulant drugs on this condition. 2) Follow-up studies of children who had behavioural or emotional problems (with the notable exception of the work of Lee N. Robins¹) were rare. Our study was one of the first prospective follow-up studies of children with specific behavioural problems whose outcome was compared with, or matched against, a normal group of children. 3) The findings summarized above indicated that the prognosis of hyperactive children as they became adolescents was relatively poor. This came as somewhat of a surprise since the paediatric literature generally gave the impression that children outgrew problems of hyperactivity in adolescence.

"At different periods, Werry, Douglas, Minde, and Lily Hechtman have been a part of the research team which studied hyperactive children at the Montreal Children's Hospital. We have shared a very special camaraderie and there has been much mutual teaching and cooperation. An example is the paper cited. When first submitted, the journal's editor felt it was too long. As first author, I felt it would be impossible to cut and I sent it to Werry, who had been on our team, and who was at that time at the University of Illinois, for advice. He returned it shortened and better written and it was resubmitted. I learned from him how to distinguish the important from the less important, and he taught me to write scientific articles. I consider the article cited to be the joint creation of all of us on the team."

1. Robins L N. *Deviant children grown up*. Huntington, NY: Krieger, 1974. 351 p.