

## Faculty Guide **ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER**

### **OVERVIEW AND DEFINITION**

According to medical research, this disorder is considered neurobiological in origin. Abnormalities of neurochemicals in the brain, as well as a tendency to be transmitted genetically reflects current thinking about this condition. According to the DSM-IV (the diagnostic manual used by physicians), ADHD can occur in three forms: the inattentive type of attention deficit, the hyperactive-impulsive type of attention deficit and the combined type, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Between 30 to 70 percent of children diagnosed with these deficits continue to have residual symptoms that persist into adulthood that impacts to a significant degree in social, academic and occupational functioning. As well, with adults, other conditions often co-exist with attention deficits that include learning disabilities as well as mental health issues including anxiety and depression. This condition is **not** due to poor parenting or diet. It is treatable through a combination of medical intervention, compensatory strategies and accommodations that will manage the symptoms.

### **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

**Inattentive type of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:** The manifestations of this type of Attention Deficit Disorder include problems with “tuning out” or “drifting away” in the middle of reading a page in a book, or in conversations with others or in following a lecture in class. The ability to screen out distractions in class and focus on what is said or demonstrated can be a major problem. This can lead to problems with both listening and note-taking.

**Impulsivity:** Characteristics of this type of Attention Deficit Disorder often results in a tendency to say what comes to mind without necessarily considering the timing or appropriateness of the remark. Being impulsive verbally, interrupting or blurting out answers in class is often noted. Other acts of impulse may also be seen behaviourally; e.g. impulsive spending, changing plans, enacting new schemes or career plans.

**Hyperactivity:** This type of Attention Deficit Disorder is often seen with individuals who exhibit excessive restlessness. They have significant problems sitting through long lectures without fidgeting or moving. They may talk excessively, and appear to be always “on the go”. Sustaining attention for long periods of time are problematic.

Other difficulties experienced by students with an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder lie in the area of organization and time management that can affect both academic and social functioning. Getting started on a task, organizing and planning the activity, and persisting with the task to completion is often a challenge. Missing deadlines on assignments, forgetting test schedules, coming to class on the wrong day or missing appointments are quite common.

#### **Instructional Strategies:**

- clear guidelines and expectations about the course, including time-lines
- some flexibility in terms of when assignments are due (spacing them out)
- encourage the use of student planners so that everything is written down - and the

- student is not relying on oral instructions
- combine lectures with classroom demonstration, visuals, and videos
- provide reminders about homework, assignment and test dates
- students should be encouraged to sit near the front to maximize attention
- minimize room distractions
- work closely with the disability support office to ensure a successful learning experience for the student

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students with disabilities are expected to accomplish the “core competencies” of their programs. To achieve this, accommodations are provided to minimize or eliminate any disadvantage their disability presents. Accommodations are unique to each individual. The disability support office in your college makes these recommendations based on confidential documentation that the student provides to the college. Some of the most commonly provided academic accommodations to students with ADHD include:

- reduced course load (encourage taking fewer courses per term to help manage workload)
- provision of a notetaker for lectures (due to problems with listening and note-taking done simultaneously)
- access to a computer to organize and edit assignments
- provision of extended time for tests and exams. The amount of extra time is determined by the disability support office, but is usually time and a half.
- tape recording of lectures
- short breaks to help the student refocus attention (testing situations included)
- writing exams/tests in a quiet room free from distractions
- time extensions on assignments (to be negotiated ahead of time between student and professor)

## **RESOURCES**

The disability support office in your college will have brochures, books and videos available for loan as well as information about local resources.

CH.A.D.D. Canada Inc. (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder)  
 P.O. Box 23007, Ottawa, ON. K2A 4E2  
 Phone (613) 231-7646

Driven to Distraction, by E. Hallowell, M.D., and J. Ratey, M.D. (also available on audiotape)  
Answers to Distraction, by E. Hallowell, M.D., and J. Ratey, M.D. (also available on audiotape)  
 Educator’s Manual - 2<sup>nd</sup> edition - Attention Deficit Disorder, by Mary Fowler  
 ADD Warehouse - 1-800-233-9273  
 Videos - ADHD in Adults - by Russell Barkley  
 Attention Deficit Disorder in Adults - by L. Weiss

*This document is a compilation of resources from CCDI member colleges.*