

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 276

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

JANUARY 2009

Antipsychotic Medicines For Children Come Under Suspicion

A panel of federal drug experts warned that doctors are overprescribing antipsychotic drugs for children, despite their significant side effects. The experts met to review the antipsychotic medicines Risperdal and Zyprexa, specifically their suitability for children. Officials from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) expected the panel to endorse the agency's current policies, but the panel unanimously rejected that course and called for the FDA to do much more to curb pediatric use.

In 2007, more than 389,000 American children and teens took Risperdal. 240,000 of them were age 12 or younger. The panel members focused their comments on Risperdal, a Johnson & Johnson product, but said their concerns were also relevant to other drugs like it. Risperdal is one of five popular "atypical antipsychotics" approved for adult use. The others are Zyprexa, Seroquel, Abilify and Geodon.

Once the Food and Drug Administration approves a drug to treat one illness, doctors can prescribe it to treat other illnesses at their own discretion, a practice

called "off-label use." Risperdal prescriptions for children are often off-label, as doctors prescribe the powerful antipsychotic drug to treat attention deficit disorders.

"The data shows there is a substantial amount of prescribing for attention deficit disorder, and I wonder if we have given enough weight to the adverse event profile of the drug in light of this," said panel member Dr. Daniel Notterman of Princeton University.

Children are especially susceptible to Risperdal's side effects, which can be quite serious. Patients who take the drug frequently suffer significant weight gain, metabolic disorders, and muscular tics that can be permanent, even after the drug is discontinued. Between 1993 and March of 2008, 1,207 children experienced severe side effects from Risperdal, and in 31 of those children the side effects were fatal.

The other atypical antipsychotics show similar potential to severely disable or kill some of the children who take them. But prescription rates continue to rise. Risperdal prescriptions for patients under 18 rose 10% in 2007, even as prescrip-

(See *Antipsychotic Drugs*, page 4)



Changes in Dictionary Reflect Changes in Childhood

The Oxford Junior Dictionary must be child-friendly and small enough for seven-year-olds to hold and thumb through. Oxford University Press can't add dozens of words to the 10,000-word dictionary without taking dozens out; but the choice to excise words associated with Christianity, British history, and nature has angered many Britons and incited debate about the changing nature of childhood.

The 2007 version of the dictionary leaves out many words of significance in Christianity such as saint, minister, abbey, altar, psalm, pew, devil, sin, monk, nun, and christen. Representatives from Oxford University Press cited Britain's multi-faith society as a reason for those deletions.

"People don't go to church as often as before," noted Vineeta Gupta, head of the Press's children's dictionaries division. "Our understanding of religion is within multiculturalism which is why some words such as 'Pentecost' or 'Whitsun' would have been in 20 years ago but not now." Gupta may have a point about "Whitsun," but "disciple"? "Parish"? Much British literature would be incomprehensible without the set of vocabulary words the dictionary now excludes. "We have a certain Christian narrative which has given meaning to us over the

last 2,000 years," argued Prof. Alan Smithers, who directs the Center for Education and Employment at Buckingham University. "To say it is all relative and replaceable is questionable."

Smithers believes the changes reflect larger changes in modern childhood. "The word selections are a very interesting reflection of the way childhood is going, moving away from our spiritual background and the natural world and towards the world that informational technology creates for us."

Words from the realm of information technology added to the 2007 dictionary include blog, mp3 player, attachment, database, and chat room. Other newcomer entries come from the psychologized modern classroom: tolerant, interdependent, conflict, negotiate, cautionary tale, cope, emotion, and curriculum. Words such as bilingual, celebrity, committee, creep, allergic, EU, Euro, and biodegradable reflect various modern realities.

Vineeta Gupta chalked up the disappearance of dozens of words related to the British countryside to the urbanization and suburbanization of the country. When older versions of the dictionary were current, "many children lived in semi-rural environments and saw the seasons. Nowadays, the environment has changed."

That's why children who use the current version will no longer find words such as pasture, colt, gerbil, heron, ox, piglet, acorn, almond, blackberry, bloom, ivy, fern, moss, clover, oats, poultry, turnip, or willow. "I am stunned that words like 'saint,' or 'buttercup,' 'heather' and 'sycamore' have all gone and I grieve it," said Anthony Seldon, master of Wellington College, a top private school. "I think as well as being descriptive, the Oxford Junior Dictionary has to be prescriptive too, suggesting not just words that are used but words that should be used. It has a duty to keep these words within usage, not merely pander to an audience. We are looking at the loss of words of great beauty. I would rather have 'marzipan' and 'mistletoe' than 'mp3 player.'" (The *Telegraph*, 12-8-08)

In defense of the changes, lexicographer Sheila Dignen, who worked on the project, cited the Press's market research into what teachers wanted from the dictionary. Teachers said they wanted to see more words related to Britain's national curriculum — which explains the appearance not only of buzzwords such as "tolerance" and "biodegradable," but also such dreary offerings as "trapezium," "chronological," "block graph," and "apparatus."



Obama's Inauguration Will Usher In Push for Universal Preschool

The \$10 billion that President-elect Barack Obama plans to spend on preschool will represent the largest new federal increase in early education since 1965, when Congress created the Head Start program. Even Head Start, which enrolls 100,000 young children annually, costs only \$7 billion a year. All 50 state governments together spend just \$3.7 billion a year on preschool.

Obama's representatives say he plans to keep his pledge of \$10 billion a year despite the nation's current economic woes. "We simply cannot afford to sideline key priorities like education," said spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

"People are absolutely ecstatic" about Obama's plans for early education, Cornelia Grumman of the First Five Years Fund told the *New York Times* (12-17-08). "Some people seem to think the Great Society is upon us again."

While preschool proponents agree that Obama's election helps their cause, they don't always agree about exactly how the expansion of preschool should go forward. Some want the government to push programs to include more children from lower-income backgrounds, while others

want public preschool available to all children of a certain age, free of charge, no matter what their families' incomes are. Some groups say that infant and toddler care should take top priority in the expansion of state-sponsored care.

A number of groups lobby for universal preschool to be extended to all four-year-olds. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the nation's second-largest teachers union, recently said they "would love to see" children "from age three on" in preschool programs. AFT president Randi Weingarten did concede that "when kids have great home situations, that is the best thing that can happen to them." (CNSNews, 12-16-08)

Obama's platform emphasized enrolling more lower-income children in daycare and extending care to infants and toddlers. The platform promised to quadruple funding for Early Head Start, the Clinton era program that serves pregnant women and children from birth to age



three. Obama also plans to expand home visitation programs for low-income mothers, an idea that sends chills down the spines of conservatives who want to preserve the integrity and privacy of the family from government intrusion.

A front-page *New York Times* article on Obama's plans for early education (12-17-08) lamented what it called the "fragmented," "underfinanced," and "bewildering" current state of early childcare in America. Libby Dogget, executive director of Pre-K Now, a group pushing for universal public preschool, derided the diversity of preschool situations that currently serve young children. "It's a patchwork quilt, a tossed salad, a nonsystem," she said.

EDUCATION BRIEFS

A large survey found that cheating and theft are widespread among American high school students. Within the past year, 30% of students have stolen something from a store, and 20% have stolen from a friend. 64% of students cheated on a test in the past year. 36% used the internet to commit plagiarism. The study by the Josephson Institute surveyed almost 30,000 students at 100 public and private high schools. Despite their appalling track records, 93% of the students said they were satisfied with their personal ethics and character. (Associated Press, 12-1-08)

The team that had planned to open a gay-themed public high school in Chicago in 2009 announced they will defer the plan and rework their proposal. (See *Education Reporter*, Nov. 2008) In response to criticism, administrators of the School for Social Justice, which had planned to open the gay-themed Pride Campus, had broadened the focus of the school to include all “disfranchised” groups, and changed the name to the “Solidarity Campus.” Divided over the new plan, which some organizers said “watered down” the school’s mission, the group removed the plan from the Board of Education’s agenda and said they would try again next year. (*Chicago Tribune*, 11-19-08)

The Dallas Independent School District (DISD) routinely assigned fake social security numbers to foreign citizens in order to get them on the payroll. In most cases, DISD was hiring these employees to teach bilingual classes. Despite the Texas Department of Education’s warning to stop the practice in 2004, DISD kept assigning false numbers for four more years. (*Dallas Morning News*, 11-14-08)

Columnist Joseph Farah called attention to the inaccuracy of the online resource Wikipedia after he spent days attempting to remove slanderous accusations from his Wikipedia biography. “If you want truth, go to sources that are legally, ethically and morally accountable to deliver it,” advised Farah. (*WorldNetDaily*, 12-16-08)

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax (314) 721-3373. Editor: Andrea Curry. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

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Higher Ed Wants its Own ‘Bailout’

As Congress debated bailing out American automakers with huge handouts from the taxpayer’s pocket, dozens of leaders of higher education requested their own “bailout.” The Carnegie Corporation, a grant-making nonprofit, paid the tens of thousands of dollars it cost to take out multi-page advertisements in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. More than 40 university presidents, chancellors and trustees signed the statement, which requested a “federal infusion of capital” of about \$45 billion.

The university executives hoped such a “bailout” would save them the trouble of lobbying their respective state legislatures for the funds they believe they need. “The dollars should not be subject to appropriation by state legislatures,” they agreed. “Federal funds should be conditional on states’ agreement not to use these federal funds as an excuse to reduce budgetary commitments to state universities.” In an unsympathetic editorial, John J.

Miller of the *Wall Street Journal* cited economist Richard Vedder, who has shown that because of the large subsidies they already receive from the government, universities tend to be “relatively inefficient institutions partly sheltered from the discipline of the market — a discipline that provides incentives for cost reductions, product improvement, and innovation.” “The more subsidies rise, the higher tuitions seem to go,” noted Miller. “If taxpayers are going to shovel out more money to these schools, the academic executives should at least allow outsiders to perform a cost ‘restructuring.’”

Two other coalitions of institutions of higher education have written separately to Congress asking for “economic stimulus” money. All three groups, however, may have to “get in line,” warns the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (12-16-08) — since hundreds of other groups from every area of enterprise are also clamoring for “bailouts” of their own.

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



Obama Chooses Education Secretary

President-elect Barack Obama named Chicago’s Arne Duncan as his Secretary of Education. Duncan has served as chief executive of the Chicago public school system since 2001. He majored in sociology at Harvard University, played professional basketball in Australia for four years, and has worked in education in Chicago since 1991.

Outgoing Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings called Duncan a “kindred spirit,” saying he is a “reform-oriented school leader who has been a supporter of No Child Left Behind and accountability concepts and teacher quality.”

Arne Duncan recently made news by recommending the creation of the Chicago Social Justice High School-Pride Campus, where half the students would be homosexual and the other half straight. Somehow that plan was deferred a year just about the time that Obama announced Duncan’s appointment.

Democrats for Education Reform, a group that is challenging the Democratic Party to rethink key reforms such as merit pay and charter schools, viewed Obama’s choice of Duncan as a savvy political move. In a recent policy paper, representatives of that group wrote that Duncan “has credibility with various factions in the education policy debate and would allow President Obama to avoid publicly choosing sides in that debate.”

Three different programs have carried forward Duncan’s ideas in the 400,000-student urban school district. The Renaissance 2010 program closes low-performing schools and replaces them with smaller, charter-type schools. So far, 75 new schools have opened, many of them

free from union contracts or from certain state regulations.

A second strategy, known as “turnaround,” leaves students where they are, but fires most of the school’s staff and reopens the school under new management. Duncan has used this strategy at eight schools. Not surprisingly, teachers unions dislike the turnaround strategy.

High School Transformation, a third Duncan program, has enrolled 50 schools. The program targets students from low-income backgrounds, and attempts to improve school performance with an influx of new resources, better curricula, and teacher training. The district has spent \$80 million on High School Transformation, with seemingly positive results.

Although Duncan has pushed performance-based pay and the creation of more charter schools, he is still fairly popular with teachers unions. The unions appreciate Duncan’s repeated calls for increased funding for schools; for example, in 2006 he called on Congress to double funding for No Child Left Behind. Duncan also says he wants teachers to have more flexibility in meeting federal mandates, though skeptics wonder what he means by this.

Duncan put into place a somewhat controversial program awarding cash to students who make As, Bs, and even Cs. The program rewards 5,000 students at 20 schools with \$50 for every A, \$35 for every B, and \$20 for every C. Students receive half the money right away, and the other half when they graduate. Duncan defended the program by saying that middle-class kids already receive such cash incentives for good grades.

Book of the Month



Smart Sex: Finding Life-Long Love in a Hook-Up World, Jennifer Roback Morse, Spence Publishing Company, 2005, 260 pp., \$27.95

Jennifer Roback Morse’s life experience and expertise put her in a unique position to confront the ideas behind what she calls “consumer sex.” Morse is a libertarian economist and author of *Love and Economics: Why the Laissez-faire Family Doesn’t Work*. Her latest book explores the social importance of the family and the significance of sex.

More than just a private act, sex is actually an act with far-reaching societal consequences, *Smart Sex* argues. Morse is not proposing public policy, but rather attempting to persuade those who think differently that sex in the context of a lifelong commitment to marriage really is “Smart Sex.”

She points out flaws in several influential modern assumptions, such as the idea that everyone is entitled to unlimited sex without sex ever resulting in the live birth of a baby. That assumption, although it drives many people’s behavior and much public policy, does not stand up to close examination.

Morse also dismantles the idea that the government and the structure of marriage should guarantee equality of career outcome for men and women. According to that modern way of thinking, Morse explains, “new mothers are entitled to the same access to career advancement as men, in spite of the substantial, if temporary, demands on a mother’s time.” Thus, the government is at fault unless it provides low-cost, high-quality day care for young children.

Such child care arrangements free new mothers from financial dependence on their husbands, but replace that personal relationship with a relationship of dependence on an impersonal bureaucracy. “This creates an illusion of independence, but not a reality of independence,” says Morse.

“Instead of strengthening the lifelong bonds between mothers and fathers that would support flexibility in moving in and out of the labor market, society has allowed the institution of marriage to be deconstructed into a non-binding, entirely private, contract.” This arrangement doesn’t work for marriages, and it definitely doesn’t work for children.

The ideas in *Smart Sex* have immediate and personal consequences. Morse encourages young people to commit themselves fully in marriages, and encourages family members to help and support each other. “If family members do not serve each other, . . . the demands for the state to take up the slack will be almost irresistible,” says Morse — and the consequences, for families and individuals, will be disastrous.

FOCUS: Famous Ethicist Won't Debate Ethics

By Dinesh D'Souza

I never knew Peter Singer could run so fast. The controversial bioethicist is originally from Australia, and I hear that they breed some good sprinters over there. Still, I was very surprised to see a man who has devoted decades to formulating some very controversial views run so desperately away from them. This was precisely what Singer did when I debated him on December 3 on the campus where he currently teaches, Princeton University.

My first debate against Singer was at Biola University in Los Angeles several months ago. There the organizers came up with the resolution, "God: Yes or No." In my opening statement I suggested that Singer was a perfect illustration of what you get when you reject God and attempt to construct ethics on a purely secular, Darwinian foundation. Singer's atheism, I suggested, is the primary foundation of his advocacy of infanticide, euthanasia, and animal rights.

Somewhat to my surprise, Singer announced to the largely Christian audience that he was not there to debate his views on infanticide and euthanasia. Rather, he said, he had come to debate whether God existed or not. For Singer, the existence of pain and suffering in the world was enough to show God's non-existence.

I countered that the existence of pain and suffering raised no questions about the existence of God, only about the nature of God. Imagine if I had a father whom I always considered to be kind, generous, and loving. Then I encounter a tragedy and my father does not help. It would make no sense for me to say, "Since you have acted contrary to my previous assessment of your character, therefore I conclude that you do not exist."

I met Singer on his chosen territory because I wanted the Biola debate to be a real engagement, not a case of two ships passing in the night. Even so, I sought a second opportunity to take on Singer's controversial positions. Here, after all, is a man who has publicly said that even infants have no rights for some 27 days after they are born. According to Singer, these infants can be killed during that time if they are felt to be an inconvenience or burden to their parents or society.

When Singer agreed to another debate, this time on his home campus of Princeton, I proposed the topic, "Can We Have Morality Without God?" Here, I thought, was a direct opportunity to link God with morality and to show what happens when a thinker like Singer seeks to formulate an entirely secular morality. Singer readily agreed to the subject. Moreover, as a defender of the resolution, he agreed to go first.

The debate, sponsored by the Christian Union and the Fixed Point Foundation, was held in a stately auditorium in Alexander Hall on the Princeton campus.

Some 800 people — around 650 of them Princeton undergraduates — were in eager attendance. The atmosphere in the room was electric. The debate had been promoted in extravagant terms as a clash of heavyweights.

Yet once again Singer began his speech by announcing that he had no intention of defending his positions on the taking of human life. In fact, he said that people who had come to hear him defend such positions could leave and go home. Singer argued that even if his views were terrible, it would not follow that atheism was terrible. He offered a strange analogy. Osama Bin Laden is a Muslim, and his views can be considered dangerous, but it doesn't follow that Islam itself is dangerous. Having compared himself to Bin Laden, Singer did not seem to be off to a very good start.

This time I refused to play Singer's game and permit him to duck his outrageous views. "Peter Singer is reluctant, perhaps understandably, to discuss his positions," I began. "Therefore it will be my task to discuss them." My argument was that when we think of secularism, we think of Europe or perhaps of the American Northeast. But the values of America and Europe — even secular values — are decisively shaped by Christianity. Many of the new atheists, I suggested, want to get rid of Christianity but keep core Christian values. Richard Dawkins has even identified himself as a "cultural Christian."

This, I said, is what makes Singer different. He is an honest atheist in that he recognizes that you can't have Christian morality without its transcendent foundation. I identified Singer with the philosopher Nietzsche's project to go beyond the "death of God" and eradicate all Christian values — including equal dignity and the preciousness of human life — from the West.

Singer, I said, is an advocate of comprehensive secularism. To discover the consequences of this secularism, I said, we must look to 20th-century regimes that

have actively sought to get rid of God and Christianity. Specifically, the Communist regimes of Stalin, Mao, and the Nazi regime provide the clearest indication of what truly God-free societies look like.

I noted that some of Singer's critics had accused him of being a Nazi and Singer himself writes

that he is frequently prevented from speaking in Germany. Singer has vociferously protested the equation of his views with those of the Nazis, and I said he was right to make this distinction. After all, I pointed out, the Nazis favored state-sponsored genocide while Singer advocated free-market homicide.

Remarkably, Singer's only defense against this argument was to point out that he had lost some of his relatives in the Holocaust, and to note that religious as well as atheist regimes had committed historical atrocities. Not once did Singer attempt to defend his shocking views. Nor did he contest the Darwinian and atheist foundation for those views. Instead, Singer went right back to the problem of pain and suffering. A just and compassionate God, he said, would never permit such disasters as earthquakes, hurricanes and cancer. Consequently there is no good God presiding over human affairs. Therefore if we are going to have morality we will have to develop morality without God.

I am giving only an abbreviated account of what was, from start to finish, a lively and wide-ranging debate. Audience applause for me was tepid in the beginning — no surprise, since I was on Singer's home turf — but grew louder throughout the evening. This suggested that I had gained ground in a generally hostile setting. Even so, Singer emailed



Dinesh D'Souza

Peter Singer

me after the debate to say that his philosophy students considered him the winner. I resisted the temptation to ask him to take another poll after he had handed out his semester grades.

I regard Singer and Christopher Hitchens as two of the most effective advocates of atheism in the United States, and perhaps anywhere. In Britain, of course, there is Richard Dawkins. I like to debate these men in order to show that theism in general, and Christianity in particular, can withstand the best that the opposition has to offer.

Hitchens, to his credit, is always ready to rumble. Dawkins, however, has shown himself to be a coward by refusing to defend his aggressively-articulated views in open debate.

And now Singer has twice shown up at debates with his running shoes on. So with Dawkins hiding under his desk and Singer sprinting for cover, is modern atheism losing its nerve?

Dinesh D'Souza is the bestselling author of What's So Great About Christianity?, Letters to a Young Conservative, The Enemy at Home, and several other books. The New York Times identified him as one of America's most influential conservative thinkers. He is in constant demand as a speaker, and his debates with prominent atheists on college campuses have given new vitality and energy to Christianity on campus. He can be contacted at his website, dineshsouza.com. This article was reprinted with permission.

Adults, Too, Know Very Little About Civics

Can you name the three branches of American government? If so (legislative, executive, and judicial), you are among the one-half of Americans who know this basic fact about the U.S. Constitution. The nonprofit Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) has already released two studies of what American college students know about civics (See *Education Reporter*, May 2007). A third and equally depressing study now shows that adults, too, lack the civic knowledge they need to be informed citizens and voters.

ISI administered a very basic test on American history, government and economics to some 2,500 Americans age 25 and older. The test asked citizens to identify, in a multiple-choice format, such key terms and names as the "New Deal," the "Electoral College," "Sputnik," "Susan B.

Anthony," "I Have a Dream," and "progressive tax." The 2,500 adults scored an average grade of 49%, an embarrassing F.

Those who had attended college fared a little better than those who had not. Test-takers with a bachelor's degree averaged 57% on the test, compared to 44% for those with only a high school diploma. 164 test-takers had held elected office, and their average score was 44%.

Only 27% of respondents knew that the Bill of Rights prohibits the establishment of an official religion. Almost 40% said they thought the president has the power to declare war. Only 50% knew that Congress shares authority with the president over U.S. foreign policy; almost one in four stated that Congress shares authority over U.S. foreign policy with the United Nations.

Americans were especially weak on the economic principles of the free market.

For example, when asked why it is that "free markets typically secure more economic prosperity than government's centralized planning," only 17% of the college graduates who took the test correctly answered that "the price system utilizes more local knowledge of means and ends." 41% of college graduates said it was because "more tax revenue can be generated from free enterprise."

"Without knowledge of your country's history, key texts and institutions, you don't have a frame of reference to judge the politics and policies of today," said ISI's Richard Brake, who heads the institute's American Civic Literacy Program. (*USA Today*, 11-19-08)



Parental Rights Lose in Court

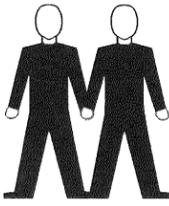
In 2004, a 4-3 decision of the Massachusetts supreme court mandated same-sex marriage. Soon same-sex relationships were taught to children in public schools. In 2005, a kindergartner named Jacob Parker was given a picture book called *Who's in a Family?*, which included pictures of two-dad and two-mom families.

Public school indoctrination increased. In 2006, second-grader Joey Wirthlin was subjected to a story of a prince who had been ordered by his mother to get married. The prince rejected several princesses, and then chose another prince. The book showed a wedding scene of the two princes, and the last page shows the two boys kissing with a red heart over their mouths.

The Parker and Wirthlin parents asked their schools to give them advance notice before subjecting their children to these teachings, which violate their religious beliefs. The schools refused. The parents then sued, and the trial court ruled against them. The parents appealed to a higher court. The families were ably represented by courageous attorneys, but fil-

ing briefs against them were the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts ACLU, the Lexington Community Action for Responsible Education and Safety, the Lexington Education Association, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, a group called "Respecting Differences," the top law firm in Boston, the Anti-Defamation League, the Gay and Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, the Greater Boston Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the Human Rights Campaign, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, and the Massachusetts Women's Bar Association.

The First Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously against the families, and even denied parents the right to opt out their children from the courses. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case, so the decision against parents' rights in public schools now stands as the law.



Vaccine Expert Calls for Changes in Injury Compensation

In November, the Advisory Commission on Childhood Vaccines heard testimony from experts, including Barbara Loe Fisher, on compensation for children who are injured by vaccines. Fisher, who co-founded the National Vaccine Information Center, says that the system currently handling injury claims is broken.

Parents whose children experience adverse effects from vaccines pursue their claims not in the civil courts but through the federal government's alternative compensation program. The National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986 set up the alternative claim process in order to create a "fair, expedited, non-adversarial, less traumatic, less expensive no-fault compensation mechanism," explains Fisher in a recent article (*Mercola.com*, 12-13-08). The program was supposed to adjudicate claims of injury fairly quickly. The act also established regulations to ensure that vaccines would be as safe as possible; but most of the safety provisions have fallen by the wayside.

"Obtaining compensation has become a highly adversarial, time-consuming, traumatic and expensive process for families of vaccine injured children," writes Fisher, "and far too many vaccine victims have been denied compensation. Meanwhile, vaccine makers and doctors have enjoyed liability protection, and dozens of doses of nine new vaccines have been added to the childhood vaccine schedule."

For more than 20 years, the National Vaccine Information Center has called for further research into the risks of vaccines to certain children. "Without understanding how and why vaccines can cause brain and immune system dysfunction, there will be no way to develop pathological profiles to help scientifically confirm whether or not an individual has been injured or died from vaccination," explains Fisher.

Although Congress never intended



NVIC
National Vaccine Information Center

to shield drug companies from all liability for vaccine injury, the federal compensation program as it now stands does basically that. Parents must apply for federal compensation before they can sue in civil court. The compensation program provides up to \$250,000 for the vaccine-associated death of a child. And although about 5,000 families have applied for compensation after their children regressed into autism just after receiving vaccines, the government does not believe any connection exists between vaccines and autism, so those families are not eligible for compensation. The scientific community is mixed on vaccines and autism, with the majority believing they are not linked, but a respectable minority believing that vaccines sometimes can cause autism.

"Public health officials have never proven that it is indeed safe to inject this number and volume of vaccines into infants," says natural health expert Dr. Joseph Mercola. The Centers for Disease Control currently recommend a vaccine schedule that administers 36 vaccine doses in the first 18 months of life, and 48 doses of 14 vaccines before kindergarten. Two-month-olds routinely receive six shots at once, with some containing formaldehyde, aluminum, or other ingredients known to have toxic or cancer-causing effects. Some vaccines on the schedule, such as the chicken pox vaccine, are made using cells from aborted fetuses.

Mercola points out that public health officials "cannot explain why, concurrent with an increasing number of vaccinations, there has been an explosion of neurological and immune system disorders in American children."

Psychiatrists Struggle to Revise Manual

Revision of the manual that draws the line between normal and abnormal human behavior has become a contentious, secretive process. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) includes the name, description and symptoms of every mental disorder recognized not only by its publisher, the American Psychiatric Association, but also by insurance companies. The tensest debates among revisionists are areas addressing gender identity, diagnosing children with mental disorders, and addictions to shopping and eating.

Politics has worked its way into the revision process, as outside groups try to influence the behaviors dropped and added to the new edition, which is still three years away from publication. A group of homosexual activists circulated an online petition objecting that two members whose work they consider demeaning were assigned to the group revising the sexual and gender identity section. In 1973, homosexual activists successfully lobbied to drop "homosexuality" and sub-

stitute "sexual orientation disturbance," which later was changed to "ego-dystonic homosexuality" before being dropped altogether in 1987.

Pharmaceutical interests covet inclusion of behaviors treated by their drugs in the DSM because insurance companies will not reimburse patients unless a diagnostic code from the manual is submitted with their claims. Some parent groups and some researchers want to see more behaviors, like those associated with pediatric bipolar, added to force insurance companies to extend coverage.

The first manual, published in 1952, recognized only about 100 mental disorders. The current DSM-V describes almost three times as many — 283 mental disorders. According to the American Psychiatric Association, all doctors and researchers who helped revise the manual must sign nondisclosure agreements. Scientists working on DSM's new edition have agreed to limit their pay to \$10,000 a year from drug makers and other sources. (*New York Times*, 12-18-08)

Antipsychotic Drugs (Continued from page 1)

tions for adults fell 5%. Overall, doctors prescribe antipsychotic drugs for five times as many children and teen patients as they did 15 years ago.

Dr. Thomas Laughren, who directs the FDA's psychiatric products division, said Risperdal's label already warns doctors of the potential side effects. The FDA can do little else to cut down on pediatric prescriptions, said Laughren, but medical specialty societies could try to reduce prescriptions by emphasizing to doctors the dangers to children. (*New York Times*, 11-19-08)

The financial interests of several very prominent psychiatrists has cast further suspicion on the use of psychotropic drugs for children. Dr. Joseph Biederman, a world-renowned Harvard child psychiatrist, has been the leading advocate of diagnosing children with bipolar disorder. Doctors diagnosed bipolar disorder in 40 times as many children in 2003 as in 1994, and the diagnosis often results in a prescription for antipsychotic medicine. Congressional investigators found early last year that Biederman had received over \$1 million from drug companies, much of it from Johnson & Johnson. Biederman failed to report this income to Harvard, as the university requires. This suggested a conflict of interest.

Besides giving money directly to Biederman, Johnson & Johnson gave another \$1 million to fund Biederman's Massachusetts General research center on bipolar disorder in children and adolescents. The center's publicly stated missions included "to move forward the commercial goals of Johnson & Johnson."

Emails and documents from Johnson & Johnson suggest that Biederman may have agreed to use his reputation and authority to promote the use of Risperdal to treat children. Johnson & Johnson obtained Biederman's signature on a scientific abstract on Risperdal, and presented it at a professional meeting as if Bieder-

man were the author, though he was not.

The documents, which surfaced in a recent lawsuit, also show that Johnson & Johnson employees consulted Biederman on how to "spin" the fact that children given placebo improved, as well as those treated with Risperdal. The company left that information out of the abstract on Risperdal that it presented under Biederman's name.

Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) discovered conflicts of interest in several other doctors' and researchers' ties to drug companies. Dr. Frederick Goodwin, a psychiatrist who hosted a radio show called "The Infinite Mind," never mentioned on air that drug companies paid him to give marketing lectures on some of the same products he mentioned favorably on his show.

On the same day in 2005 that Goodwin earned \$2,500 from GlaxoSmithKline for promoting the mood stabilizer Lamictal at a medical conference, Goodwin recommended on air the use of mood stabilizers for children. "As we'll be hearing today," he said, "modern treatments — mood stabilizers in particular — have been proven safe and effective in bipolar children." Goodwin also made the controversial statement that children with untreated bipolar disorder could suffer brain damage. Over the course of that year, Goodwin received \$329,000 for promoting Lamictal.

The program's producer said he was unaware of Goodwin's ties to drug companies, and that the relationship violated NPR's requirements. NPR removed the program, which had over one million listeners and had won more than 60 journalism awards. (*New York Times*, 11-30-08)

