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Video Games For ADHD

POSTED: 10:46 am EDT August 1, 2006

BACKGROUND: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is often first noticed in some children in preschool and early school years. Children with this disorder have a difficult time controlling their behavior. Often, they fall behind in school because it is difficult for them to pay attention. Approximately 2 million children in the United States have ADHD. It is a biological disorder that has to do with the way chemicals send messages in the brain. Some studies have shown that lower levels of activity in certain parts of the brain may be associated with ADHD. The disorder seems to have a genetic link. It is not surprising for a parent of an ADHD child to be diagnosed at the same time.

TREATMENT: There are many medications available to help correct the conditions in the brain of a child with ADHD. Some of these medications are stimulants. They would stimulate most people but have a calming effect of children and adults with ADHD. Some of the drugs available include:

- Methylphenidate (brand names: Concerta, Ritalin)
- Dextroamphetamine (brand names: Dexedrine, Dextrostat)
- D- and l-amphetamin racemic mixture (brand name: Adderall)
- Pemoline (brand name: Cylert)
- Atomoxetine (brand name: Strattera)
- Clonidine (brand name: Catapres)
- Desipramine (brand name: Norpramin)
- Imipramine (brand name: Tofranil)
- Bupropion (brand name: Wellbutrin)

Research has shown these medications don't work for every child.

BIOFEEDBACK: Any device that provides information about a patient's body -- a thermometer, a scale, or an electrocardiogram -- is giving biofeedback. New research is showing there are certain forms of biofeedback that can be controlled by the patient. Studies show that patients with ADHD can learn to regulate their brainwaves. An EEG sensor is attached to the scalp of the patient. At the clinic of Margaret MacDonald, M.D., the brain waves must be at a certain level for the patient to have control over a video game. The fun interaction with the video game gives the child with ADHD incentive to concentrate. If the child does not concentrate the lose control of the game. Repeated practice with the biofeedback system teaches the child's brain how to increase the brainwaves associated with a more attentive state. Drawbacks include the price and the length of time it takes to see results. Months of one-hour sessions may happen before any significant progress is seen. Costs range from \$3000 to \$4000, much more than medications alone. Also, some doctors point out the biofeedback training requires the very kind of prolonged concentration patients with ADHD lack.

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