

ADHD kids should be reassessed

13mar07

CHILDREN diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) should be reassessed, a Melbourne specialist has said following a report showing Australia was among the heaviest users of ADHD drugs.

The US study, headed by eminent health economics and public policy expert Richard Scheffler, found the use of drugs to treat ADHD had more than tripled worldwide since 1993.

Researchers at the University of California found Australia was among the heaviest users of drugs to treat ADHD.

Child and adolescent psychiatrist George Halasz, from the Monash Medical Centre in Melbourne, said the researchers found about 30 per cent of Australian children diagnosed with ADHD were misdiagnosed.

The study said one in 100 children were medicated for it.

The reason ADHD was often misdiagnosed was through a misunderstanding of the disorder, Mr Halasz said on Channel 9.

"ADHD is much like fever, it is a symptom and it signals that something is not right," he said.

"So a number of us (psychiatrists) for over a decade have been saying just to medicate these children is really very poor medicine.

"The medication will do something to relieve the symptoms, but it doesn't get at the cause."

ADHD initially appears in childhood and has symptoms such as hyperactivity, forgetfulness and poor impulse control.

Amphetamine drugs can control the symptoms, experts say.

Mr Halasz said parents of children diagnosed with ADHD and on medication should ask their doctor to review their child's case.

"Return to their doctor and discuss the reason their child is taking the medication," Mr Halasz said.

"I think the medical profession has a huge responsibility in this and there is no shirking the issue.

"I think there will probably be major repercussions in the psychiatric and paediatric professions as a result of this (study)."