

**Kalamazoo County CHADD  
Educational Program Re-Cap**

Topic: Medication Use  
Speaker: Robert Bulten, MD  
Date: November 13, 2007

On November 13, 2007, over fifty people came to listen to Dr. Robert Bulten address the issue of “Effective use of Medications to Treat ADD and Mood Disorders.” Dr. Bulten’s medical practice focuses on treatment of individuals with ADD and he had much wisdom to share with the group. He reflected on how today’s face-paced life has made it much more difficult for people with ADD to be successful in school and work. After describing the commonly known characteristics of ADD, he said that approximately 75% of individuals with ADD have a co-existing condition they must manage:

- Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Bi-Polar Disorder
- Learning difficulties

Dr. Bulten stated the goal in treating ADD is to achieve optimal “normalization” for the individual. This means achieving a level of effectiveness where the individual seems no different from other students, co-workers, family members, etc. He further stated that “normalization” cannot be achieved without medication combined with other non-medical interventions.

The audience had many questions for Dr. Bulten.

Q: How safe are ADD medications?

Dr. B: They are abundantly safe. The side effects from the medications are also quite minor - loss of appetite and sleeplessness – and are typically short term.

Q: When taken for depression, are medications less effective if started and then stopped?

Dr. B: This has been known to be the case especially in cases of clinical depression. If an individual goes off their anti-depressant because they believe they are doing fine, they can slip back into the “black hole.” It is harder to get back to an effective level the more times the person goes into that “black hole.”

Q: How at risk are ADD kids to use drugs?

Dr. B: A study about five years ago looked at three groups of 15 year old kids. Group #1 was kids with ADD that had not been treated and 33% indicated they had used drugs. Group #2 was a control group of “normal” kids and 10% reported drug use. Group #3 was ADD kids who had received treatment and 13% reported drug use. There is no

statistical significance between Group 2 and 3. Bottom line, individuals with ADD that goes untreated are more likely to self-medicate with marijuana, alcohol and drugs.

Dr. Bulten concluded his comments with an important piece of advice for individuals managing ADD. He said to take time and pause to ask yourself, “How does my next decision impact the rest of my life.”