

Is Your Child the Class Troublemaker or Does He Have a Traumatic Brain Injury?

Source: Produced by Victoria Tilney McDonough and Brian King

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=3213>

Dr. Deborah Little: The question of medication intervention in pediatric brain injury is a really controversial... it's a great question, and it's one that we struggle with all the time. And my colleague Jane Jollette can talk about this in much more detail.

The issue is a lot of these kids present in the same way as your bully or your trouble maker in school. A lot of times parents don't put 2 and 2 together for many years after it happens; in some cases with very dramatic effects. So a large proportion of our juvenile detention centers are filled with children with a history of brain injury because common effects are aggression, and impulsivity, and poor decision making.

So it becomes a real challenge. The question of the use of drugs that we use to manage the behavior, which is similar between brain injury and these other conditions, is controversial because we really don't know what the long term effects are of these medications on recovery from injury, or even on the developing brain.

It's a really... important topic to question, and a lot of people will recommend short term use depending on the type of injury that's there. But it becomes something where you have to understand that this is because of an injury, and is not necessarily ADHD in itself, because you have to get back to diagnosing and treating the injury itself; and that's something that we, in this country, have been historically poor at. We give a label that's related to the behavior, and not necessarily related to the injury.