

The Feingold Program

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by Anthony Kane, MD

Before We Proceed

We are about to discuss what is officially labeled as an alternative medicine treatment for ADHD.

You should understand that a synonym for "alternative" is controversial. The officially orthodox medical community does not sanction what we will be discussing. If this gives you goose bumps you had better stop reading now.

If not we can proceed.

Feingold and Food Dyes

Historically, Dr. Benjamin Feingold, was the first person to promote the idea that dietary items might be responsible for causing ADHD. Feingold focused on food additives, which are essentially anything that nature did not put in your food. Each American consumes 8 to 10 pounds of food additives every year. Feingold also implicated some natural chemicals, such as naturally occurring salicylates.

Feingold maintained that salicylates, artificial colors, and artificial flavorings were responsible for 40 to 50 percent of the hyperactivity found in children. He claimed that the most effective form of treatment for hyperactivity was to prepare and serve children foods that were free of these substances. His ideas received tremendous media attention and Feingold Associations, comprised primarily of parents, developed in almost every state.

The Anti Feingold Position

Initially, the medical community took Feingold very seriously. His idea was so popular, that it was impossible to ignore. However, after some investigation the final verdict was that Feingold was wrong.

The most vocal opposition of Feingold came from the Nutrition Foundation.

In 1980, an expert review team assembled by the Nutrition Foundation concluded:

"Based on seven studies involving approximately 190 children, there have been no instances of consistent, dramatic deterioration in behavior in hyperactive children challenged, under double-blind conditions, with artificial food colorings. . . . There are three . . . exceptions to these generally negative conclusions; but, in all three cases, the deterioration is reported by the mother with no other objective, confirming evidence available. . . . Without the confirming evidence of objective tests and/or outside observers, even these exceptions cannot be considered as definite evidence that there may be an occasional, genetically determined, sensitivity to food colorings. Though one cannot prove that no such children will be found, sufficient numbers of highly selected children have been studied to feel confident that such specific sensitivity, if found, will be rare."

These negative findings stand in sharp contrast to the 32-60 percent of children reported by Dr. Feingold and others to improve dramatically when additives were eliminated from their diets.

Nevertheless, in 1980 the Nutrition Foundation, a well-respected group of scientists dedicated to the furthering of better health through proper nutrition, strongly rejected Feingold's hypothesis and concluded that the additives used by the food industry are perfectly safe. Just so you should know, the Nutrition Foundation was established and funded by Coca Cola, the Life Saver Company, and a number of other food industry giants.

The Pro-Feingold Position

The information supporting Feingold is actually much easier to find. You can view most of it yourself by going to the Feingold Association web site.

I am not going into all the studies presented by the Feingold Association to prove that Feingold was right. Nor will I discuss here how they explain

away the studies showing that Feingold was wrong.

About the Author

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