

*F. Kellens*

January 14, 1971

Miss Sherrye Henry  
WCBS-TV  
51 West 52nd Street  
New York, New York 10019

Dear Miss Henry:

Thank you for the opportunity to read your editorial "Amphetamines for Children". The evidence for the successful use of central stimulants in hyperactive children is clear, and, as you stated, often appears magical in reducing hyperactivity so the child, his classmates, his teacher and family are delighted. Fortunately, tolerance does not develop and treatment can be continued as long as necessary.

The metabolism of amphetamines is not unusual and no complications to its prolonged use has been defined.

It is a truism that no chemical which is given to man is absolutely safe, and in each instance the use of a medication must be balanced by the potential gains and the potential risks. In this use of amphetamines, the gains are obvious; the defined risks non-existent. There is no evidence that the use of stimulants in childhood leads to abuse in adolescence. There is clear evidence that hyperactive children, if untreated, are disruptive; fail to learn, are stigmatized and may suffer prolonged handicaps.

I would, of course, concur in your suggestion that medication for this illness be prescribed by trained and experienced professionals. But I would suggest that your emotional response to the problem colored the editorial - unnecessarily and to its detriment. The last two sentences are emotional outbursts, not in keeping with the leadership and dignity of WCBS. In the text, the selection of such negative, emotional words set a tone that is unfortunate: "jazz adults up", "black magic", "drugged", "drugging him to submission".

Miss Henry

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While I agree with the central message, that treatment should be used sparingly where required and under professional supervision - I think the tone, emotional attitude, absence of facts demeaned the message. It ~~is~~ not clear that a reply would serve a constructive purpose, unless the community expresses considerable anxiety about the message.

Again, my thanks for the opportunity to consider this issue.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry

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