



Clinic Reports Dramatic Results Treating Autism, ADD Without Drugs

3/21/2006 7:00:00 AM

To: National Desk, Health Reporter

Contact: A. Harris of Busystreet Media, 404-876-4570, 404-245-8080

LOS ANGELES, March 21 /U.S. Newswire/ -- She was a mother without hope. Diagnosed with autism, her six year old son, EJ, bit other children, threw tantrums and chairs. "He had no future," says Beatrice Tan, whose family stopped going to church because it was too risky to put EJ in the nursery.

Now, after several months of specialized, neurofeedback therapy at Drake Institute of Behavioral Medicine -- <http://www.drakeinstitute.com> -- in Los Angeles, EJ no longer bites: he hugs. He has friends, and "we have hope," says Beatrice, now back in church with EJ and husband, Ronnie.

"We see autistic children coming out of their social comas, it's huge," says Dr. David F. Velkoff, Drake's medical director, "and children with ADHD making big learning breakthroughs" -- all without the kinds of drugs often prescribed to control out of control kids, like Ritalin, and recently called risky by the FDA.

"In the long run, these drugs have not been proven to be safe; they're quick fixes that short-change children," says Dr. Velkoff, a long-time critic of recklessly prescribing drugs like Ritalin and Adderal for learning disorders like ADD. "These drugs should be used cautiously, and only prescribed for children for a limited period of time, and as a last resort. "Of course, there are extreme cases requiring medication," he adds, "but at Drake, our goal is to eliminate the drugs wherever possible, and use our advanced neuro-feedback to help children close their developmental gaps."

A physician with a master's degree in psychology, Dr. Velkoff reports dramatic results for most of the 100 autistic children like EJ that Drake's four clinics have been treating over the last year. "We're excited whenever we can help jump start a child's life without drugs," he says.

Instead, Drake uses advanced biofeedback technology it first developed to treat learning disorders like ADD and ADHD, then modified for autism. Over the last 25 years, Drake has treated more than 5,000 children for attention deficit disorders without drugs, he says, then last year began focusing on children also diagnosed with high-functioning Autism or Asperger Syndrome. In treating their ADD, Drake staff found their autism symptoms dramatically improved as well.

"Like a lot of accidental advances in medicine, we stumbled onto it, but it's working," he says of Drake's medical mystery. "We think it helps these children rewire brain synapses, so life starts to make sense."

To make sense of their surprising progress, Drake cranked up an initial clinical study of 18 patients, all children with autism disorders and poor social skills. After 20-40 neurofeedback sessions, parents reported children were not only responding to peers, but showed a new awareness to the feelings of others, says Dr. Velkoff, whose clinic is planning a joint study with the world-reknowned University of California at Irvine Child Development Center to further document and understand "how and why it's working-and what works best."

"EJ used to ask, 'Mommy, why don't I have friends?'" says Beatrice Tan in a videotaped interview on Drake's website, www.drakeinstitute.com. "I'd say, 'You have to be nicer, talk to them, don't take their toys, share!' It's no longer a problem. "

"Unfortunately, we can't help every child with autism, but we've seen big improvements in three out of four children we treat," says Dr. Velkoff. "Parents tell us they keep getting better even after treatment ends. We hear, 'it's a different child' all the time.' Their lives begin to blossom."

Contact: Busystreet Media; A. Harris; 404-876-4570, 404-245- 8080, harrisa3@bellsouth.net or David F. Velkoff, MD, Medical Director, Drake Institute of Behavioral Medicine & medical associates, 11645 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 745, Los Angeles, CA, 90025, 800-700-4233, [drvelkoff @drakeinstitute.com](mailto:drvelkoff@drakeinstitute.com), <http://www.drakeinstitute.com>

EDITORS: Dr. David Velkoff available for interviews. Detailed background paper also available. B roll/photos available. Video available: hear what parents of autistic kids have to say at <http://www.drakeinstitute.com>. Also more on autism study.

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