

22 January 2020

Dear Commissioners,

I heard the alarming news that there is a proposal to screen zero to three year old children in Australia for “mental illness” or “emerging mental illness” though through Freedom of Information I have discovered the psychiatrist Professor Oberklaid has advised the screening be referred to as “Emotional Development Check”. For the sake of brevity and to avoid euphemisms I will call it for what it is, a “mental health” check.

There are no physical tests to determine the diagnosis of mental illness. Instead an arbitrary list of questions is used.

Have you studied the method by which these babies and toddlers are proposed to be screened?

Do you know the intended actual questions to be used?

Are they so general that any child is at risk of being labelled “mentally ill”.

I am aware of the increasing numbers of young Australians being prescribed psychiatric medication such as anti depressants, anti psychotics and other psychotropic drugs and the Class 8 drug Ritalin or the slow release Concerta.

Are you aware of the extensive list of the side effects of psychiatric medication?

Ritalin 10 has 42 listed side effects and another 15 with other medication containing the same drug substance as Ritalin 10.

Concerta has 58 listed side effects.

The side effects are of serious concern such as in the case with Ritalin 10 excessive emotional distress or excitement, troubled sleep or restlessness, feeling anxious, agitated, loss of weight and slower growth in children, mood changes such as depression or irritability, abnormal heart rhythm, palpitations.

The Ritalin 10 side effects list continues with a warning to tell your doctor immediately or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if the user notices any of the listed 18 symptoms, 2 of which I note here.

The first being chest pain, breathlessness, sudden death.

The second of the 18 mentioned I have selected is: feeling irritated, aggression, mood changes, abnormal behaviour or thinking, anger, thoughts or attempts of suicide (including completed suicide).

The drug Concerta does not fare any better. Similar symptoms are listed with 35 of the 58 in a separate category notifying Concerta users to tell their doctor immediately if they notice any of the following symptoms listed under Behavioural Changes, Nervous System, Reproductive, Sight, Skin or Hair, Body Temperature, Heart or Blood Pressure and Other Side Effects.

Does the above information not concern you?

How could anyone seriously contemplate testing babies and toddlers for “mental health” using an arbitrary and general list of questions and without any actual medical tests to determine diagnosis.

And if this were to occur how soon before a very young child would be drugged with substances that are known to have possible adverse effects on their physical, emotional and cognitive development?

Are there any written guarantees that psychiatric medication will not be prescribed after the supposed “mental illness” checks?

If any of the known dangerous side effects from psychiatric medicine were occurring in other medication there would be an outcry and investigation resulting in withdrawal of the drug and possible litigation.

How can it be that children are drugged with these known potential dangers to their well being? And how could anyone possibly think to screen newborn babies to three year old children for “mental illness” with this knowledge. Once any child is determined “mentally ill” is it not only a matter of time before they too will be medicated?

Has there been any research on how people have fared who were on psychiatric medication for years from an early age?

If not, why not? And if so what are the true results?

I will have it known publicly that I am vehemently opposed to the proposal to screen zero to three year old children for “mental illness or “emerging mental illness” or, as the proposed screening terminology has been recently changed to “emotional development” checks, my position still stands. I am thoroughly against this proposal.