

11 January 2020

Re: Submission re Draft Report – Mental Health – released 31 October 2019

Dear Colleagues of the Productivity Commission

I put forward my Submission in response to the Draft Report on Mental Health in Australia, issued and released for public feedback on 31 October 2019.

I am particularly perturbed by the proposal of “early intervention” and potential screening of “1.25 million zero to three year olds” to be screened for “mental illness” (Draft Recommendations and Findings: Part IV Early Intervention and Prevention). I do not feel this course of action is going to produce anything other than more young children on mind-altering drugs which not only blunt their natural feelings and emotions but also poison their young bodies. It also prevents parents from looking at more holistic methods, such as diet, exercise, environment and confronting any social issues the child may have. Drugs deaden, suppress and camouflage the real problem which is more often than not, diet and environment.

As a parent, aunt and great-aunt, I have always been aware of the health and mental health of my family. Through years of experience, trial and error, I have noted that from an early age, a stable daily routine, good food (nutrition) and sleep have handled the regular childhood problems and tantrums. Too much sugar, lack of vital nutrients (vitamins and minerals), and not enough fresh air and exercise, play a big part in the day-to-day behaviour and development of a child. Not having a sustaining breakfast before attending school, not eating lunch, fast-food dinners which are low in protein and fresh vegetables can cause an array of mood-swings, irritability and restlessness.

Screening very young children (0 – 3 years) is unnecessary. It is how they develop due to family circumstances, physical health and habits and their environment which will determine how they grow and develop. Medical checks for their diet, sleeping habits and exercise are far more important and will do more good in the long term. Do they get fresh air and exercise daily? Too many children these days live in units without a park or play area; they watch TV or play computer games indoors, instead of getting out into the fresh air and doing something active and productive. Educating parents regarding their child’s diet and exercise is vital, so that they can set a good example and help their children eat and live healthily. Additionally, blood, (hair analysis and other) tests for vitamin and mineral deficiencies are extremely important. A lack of minerals - magnesium and zinc - in the diet, has been noted to cause/contribute to ADHD symptoms. James Greenblatt MD states on the website Psychiatry Redefined:

“ ... There is another nutrient that should be considered by all healthcare professionals, parents, and those struggling with ADHD: magnesium. Magnesium is a macromineral required for hundreds of the body’s biochemical reactions including protein synthesis, muscle and nerve function, blood glucose control, bone development, DNA synthesis, and glutathione synthesis.

...

Thus, correcting copper/zinc imbalances and addressing magnesium deficiencies can yield significant reductions in ADHD symptomology and improve cognitive performance.”ⁱ

I ask you to please re-consider this aspect of screening 0 – 3 year olds on the current basis proposed. It is highly dangerous and will lead to incorrect diagnoses based on its current criteria. Education for

parents and children on diet/nutrition, a daily routine, sufficient sleep, sufficient exercise and good communication between parents and children (and parents and their general practitioners, the child's childcare staff and teaching staff) will make far greater progress than any drug. Why is it that so many of our young teenagers and young adults are deciding to play with recreational drugs, these days? Could it be that they have been introduced to drugs (prescribed) at a very early age or have seen parents taking prescription medication to handle stress, depression, etc? I am positive this is the case.

Additionally, a lack of Vitamin B¹²ⁱⁱ and Vitamin D has also been found to adversely affect mood and cause anxiety. There is much research to back up the effects of supplementing our diets to get essential vitamins and minerals which we just don't get these days from our supermarket food. The term a "superfood" has suddenly become the 'buzz' word for food to boost our current diets.

Therefore, I advocate a natural, holistic approach instead of screening. Those children with real problems stand out from the rest – they aren't the norm – and it will very likely be found that they have a severe deficiency in one or other vitamin or mineral (or several), or are just not getting enough protein in their diet, or a balanced diet. A thorough medical check and check of their living environment and family circumstances would be the first option for these cases.

Thank you for considering this submission.

ⁱ ADHD - **Finally Focused: Mineral Imbalances & ADHD (Magnesium Deficiency)**

By [James Greenblatt, MD](#) July 1, 2019 Web Link:

<https://www.psychiatryredefined.org/finally-focused-mineral-imbbalances-adhd-magnesium-deficiency/>

ⁱⁱ "Memory loss and cognitive difficulties", Dr Joseph M Mercola

<https://articles.mercola.com/vitamins-supplements/vitamin-b12.aspx>