Introduction to ADHD and the Summit

This is doctor talks. Real talk from real doctors. Only issues that matter to you most. Welcome back to the Raising Healthier Kids Summit. I'm here with the amazing Dana K, who is the founder of the ADHD Thrive Institute, one of my favorite practitioner shares, and I love to speak to you about anything.

You know, ADHD, mental health. So I really appreciate you being here and chatting with us today. Thank you so much, Joe, for having me. I'm really excited.

Thank you, thank you. So let's let's start by talking about what's going on, you know, in terms of, you know, statistics or just what you're seeing in terms of ADHD.

I mean, I can say for sure, you know, as a pediatrician that we're seeing a lot more of this. It's a much bigger concern. It's a lot more in parents minds.

We're certainly more aware of it. So I think, you know, we're getting more diagnoses, but at the same time it's skyrocketing. So what are we what are we looking at in terms of what's going on in the world in terms of ADHD?

Yeah, it really is quite shocking the the increase in diagnosis. We've got we've got one school of thought that thinks that it is because we're better at diagnosing, using.

And then we've got the other school of thought that is like is there something in our environment or that we're putting in our body that is exacerbating ADHD?

And so I think both are true.

Rising ADHD Diagnoses and the Trash Can Analogy

But, you know, there's this 6 million children in the USA alone that that have been diagnosed with ADHD, and three quarters of them are receiving treatment of strong medication and behavioral therapy.

And, and I think the like your only given one form of treatment most of the time when you go to the doctor. And that's exactly what happened when I went to the doctor with my son back in the day, all those years ago when he was four.

And, he was immediately given prescription medication and he was four years old and we weren't told about anything other than prescription medication.

And I think that, parents need to be informed that there are other options out there. And I liked it. You know, I think I think when it comes to ADHD, it's kind of this spectrum isn't and it's kind of like, a spectrum of symptoms.

And, and I think that we're just sort of like slapping this label on kids because they may have more hyperactivity than some others. They may not be out of focus as well as others.

And so we just slapping on this diagnosis. But I really think for me, what is driving that increased diagnosis and I can I can I do this little bit of a funny analogy.

And I don't, I don't, I don't I haven't shared this very often, but I have these like little, little trash can and, you know, there is evidence, obviously, that that ADHD is genetically predisposed.

But it doesn't mean that it's your destiny and that these symptoms can't be reduced or removed altogether. So

when I think about the contributors, to ADHD or to that diagnosis, and based on my experience, I like to explain it with the trash can.

And, and I think that we're sort of all born with this, this internal metaphorical trash can in our bodies. And, you know, the goal through life is to keep the trash empty, just like we do in our house.

We want to keep the toxic load low in our bodies. And, you know, we're not all born with an empty trash can. For example, my son, he already had stuff in it.

He was induced, with medication when I, when I gave birth with him, he wasn't growing. He came straight out. They put him on medication. They, he was on a CPAp machine.

He wasn't breastfed because he was in the nick. Q and inside the trashcan had already had a little bit of stuff in it, and that trash can kept on filling up and filling up over time.

So, you know, we've got things like poor diet, we've got things like environmental toxins, which I'm sure you've talked about on this summit. We've got things like bacteria and parasites meds, and they all contribute to the load on the trash can.

Then, just like our trash can in our house, we we take it out on to the side of the road on a Monday for the garbage truck to pick it up. And empties it, and then we bring it inside.

But what if some of our kids aren't able to empty their trash can, meaning they don't have very good working detoxification pathways? They can't empty their trash can on a regular basis.

That load fills up and up and up until it tips over into our body, causing inflammation. And that inflammation is driving those ADHD symptoms. And so, you know, I am of the thought that yes, their ADHD is real.

Okay. But I don't think the the number of kids that have been diagnosed is correct. Now, I've worked with over 1300 kids with ADHD and all of them improve.

When we reduce the load on the trash can, we optimize their detoxification pathways. So even if they have true ADHD and I can tell you a lot of them don't, some of them we just change the diet and those ADHD symptoms go away.

Misdiagnosis, Treatment Gaps, and Chronic Disease Trends

That tells me a lot of those kids don't actually have true ADHD. Yeah, no, I mean, we said so much amazing stuff. There so many things that that, you know, I echo when I speak to people and I think it's important just to kind of emphasize some of those things because number one, you know, you mentioned that the rates are going up.

Right? And we know that that there's no question I think I you know, I totally agree with you. I always say this, whether it's autism, ADHD, everything that yes, we're much better at diagnosis. That's a good thing.

There are people that were never diagnosed that that should be that they can get help. That's good. But that's not what's going on. That's just like a very small part of it.

There's absolutely people that have ADHD. There's no question about it. 100%. The vast majority of them probably are misdiagnosed or are treated when they don't necessarily need to be treated because they have a more mild form.

ADHD is not it's not a thing that's easily testable. Right? So it's it's, you know, if you have a blood test and you're like, oh, you have this genetic condition or B that that's one thing.

ADHD is not like that, at least not yet. Maybe one day we'll we'll be able to tested, you know, those would be some

genes that are, that are there that's easier.

But for the, for the time being, it's like what I see when people come to me or when they come to you, it's they have a few symptoms, you know, some of them are going to be super severe and absolutely need to be on medication, and that's totally fine, and that's reasonable.

But the majority of them, they're a little hyperactive. Like you said, they have some issues at school. Maybe they're misbehaved, you know, whatever, whatever it is.

And then they go to the doctor or they go to the practitioner and they do a one hour assessment or, you know, whatever it is. Oh, yeah, you're very hyperactive.

Here's a pill. It's going to help you. Yeah. And that and that is really sad because that's not the solution to the problem. The solution is, well, why are they acting like that?

What can we do in their life? What what is going on in their bodies that we can help. And you know that because you see and I know it because I see it that there are kids that get these labels that don't have it or have a very mild form of what we call, yes, you need change.

Some things up in their life and they're completely, you know, completely back to normal at school. They don't have those symptoms anymore. You never called ADHD.

They don't need their medication anymore and they function perfectly. Oh, 100%. And I and I think also and I don't know if anyone has shared this statistic already on, on, on the summit, but, it's estimated that like something like 54% of American children have been diagnosed with a chronic disease or illness in that was in 2018.

But, but you know, if that figure was only like 15% a couple of years before that, and it's really shocking to look in that to that increase. And, you know, 1 in 2 of anxiety, asthma, type one type two diabetes, epilepsy, heart problems, allergic conditions, all of that 1 in 6 have developmental delays.

And previously the autism one was read was it was 1 in 68. But it's just been reclassified as one inch 32. And you know, I think that, it is that rapid rise.

And I want to tell you something. I've actually just come out with a dye free for ADHD, just mini short program for families that just want to, like, dip their toes in the water because not everyone wants to make these massive changes.

But, interestingly, the diagnosis rate of ADHD is double in the US that it than it is in Canada than it is in Europe. And the funny thing is, there is a lot of dyes and artificial flavors and artificial dyes and colors that are not allowed in the food supply in Europe or in Canada or in Australia, or they have to put a warning label on it.

But here in America, they're allowed free range into any of the products, and that's one of those toxins that's adding to that load on the on the trash can.

Yeah. No, no, definitely. I mean we're we're doing everything wrong. Trouble like as wrong as you could possibly do it. I think on a macro scale when you're talking about these are mental mental health, ADHD type diagnoses, like just like you said, like we're we're loading the gun.

You know, we're we're we have all these chemicals that we know are bad.

Gut-Brain Connection and Nutrient Deficiencies

Like, we know because not even, you know, some things. It's like, you know, there's not enough research. We're not really sure, but there are certain things like food dyes, which we like, know 100% at this point rate, some of these symptoms.

And yet the kids are eating these things every day, all the time. They're in the food at school, you know, they're they're eating. And then you're like, oh, they're hyperactive. Well, well duh.

Like, you know, they're hyperactive, their brains are on fire. They're not getting the nutrition they need. And then we label them ADHD, and then we give them a medicine to calm them down.

And it's like, you know, some of those. And then that medicine has die in it. Sure. Yeah. I mean, that even adds to it. I know, and it's and it is, it is really sad.

But I just want to say to, you know, parents listening, you know, it's not your fault. And you know, it, it's that macro level. It's that it's the, it's coming from that higher power in a way that like, things need a change.

You know, there needs to be legislation put in because our kids are suffering and they don't need to. Right. Exactly. And and that's why it's so important to for people to realize like, yes, we need some macro changes.

We need legislation. But then also the good thing for somebody who's listening, who wants to make changes, a lot of these things you do have a lot of power over. Yes.

And once you have an awareness that that we do have some agency over this and there are things that we can do to make a difference, then you start making those changes and you see the difference in some people, you know, we'll work with a practitioner like you.

Other people will just do this on their own at home, following, you know, courses or whatever. But I think the big thing is at first just to realize that we're actually creating the problem, and therefore we can be part of the solution for our own kids if we're mindful, 100% and we've got that, we've now got the power, you know, when you when you know better, you do better.

And, we can definitely make those changes. I will say to families like Rome wasn't built in a day. You don't need to make all the changes on day one. I'm sure that you're listening to this summit and you're getting all of these amazing information from these, you know, really well trained practitioners.

But you know, just take that one little step forward. One step keeps you moving forward, doesn't it? Definitely. And can you talk a little bit about, some of the things that you see that people might want to think about in terms of like some nutrient deficiencies or other things that you.

Yeah, comment that, that maybe people could, could either test for or just supplement for think about and then maybe they'll notice some differences. Yeah, definitely.

Look, I think the biggest thing with ADHD, the gut brain connection and I'm sort of going to tie it back to the, the statistics that, you know, I said earlier with that increase of the disease and the diagnosis from, you know, just a few years ago to what it is today and that that rise, you know, is occurring so rapidly because it begins in the gut.

You know, the the reason is it begins in the gut. 80% of the body's entire immune system is within the gut wall, along with billions of nerve cells, an extensive amount of beneficial gut bacteria.

So all of our children's health is literally quite, you know, connected to everything that occurs in the gut. And I've spoken to, I think like tens of thousands of families now.

And I wish that I started some sort of like, sorry, my little, my little dog just popped up on the windowsill there, but I wish I started some sort of, survey and asked families how many of their kids had been on countless amounts of antibiotics.

And, I will tell you that a lot of them had. And what happens with those antibiotics, which I'm sure you've shared many times in the past, you know, it works by killing that bacteria and or preventing it from growing.

But unfortunately, most antibiotics can't distinguish between that good and bad bacteria. And and that means they wreak havoc on the gut's healthy bacteria.

So we've got we've got this. We've got, you know, the breakdown in the gut. You know, many people can actually last some. It can suffer lasting changes to their gut flora as a result.

So we've got this large percentage of the children that have been on these multiple rounds. So it's not not hard to say that those disorders are on the rise, along with ADHD diagnosis.

Now, I just want to tie gut health to the brain health. What the gut brain connection means is that, in essence, our brains are deeply connected to our guts.

And if our guts aren't functioning well, our brains won't function well either. Before I go to the brain, 95% of the body's serotonin and 50% of the body's dopamine is produced in the gut.

And these neurotransmitters are the ones that help manage our emotions. They balance our mood. They help our cognitive function. And emotional dysregulation is a common symptom of ADHD.

Even though I don't actually think it's on their diagnostic criteria list. I will tell you, a majority of kids diagnosed with ADHD have huge emotional dysregulation or tantrums, but many parents don't realize that this emotional dysregulation actually starts in the gut, where that serotonin and that dopamine are made.

So the problem isn't the emotions themselves, but the fact that the correct amount of these vital neurotransmitters aren't being made in the first place.

So that's one part of it. But the brain has many areas involved in in gut function. And the main area is the frontal lobe. And that's the area of the brain.

It talks to the gut via two way chemical messengers. And the frontal lobe is involved in attention and focus, executive function planning, organizing, problem solving.

I mean, do any of those areas, sound like ones affected by ADHD? I'm sure, you know, listeners, if you're familiar with, with common ADHD symptoms, they definitely should.

Children with ADHD often struggle with all of those tasks, but because the frontal lobe is in the brain, many people are under the impression it's the brain that needs care, when in reality it's also the gut that's causing the problem.

It's like this highway between the two of them. So, you know, compromise got compromise, Brian. That's that's definitely, you know, the main area that needs to sort of you need to start to work on.

But, you know, there are common sort of like deficiencies or supplements that that families can definitely get started with. We all say that every child is a bio individual, meaning that every child is unique.

And so what works well for one child might might show little effect for another. But I think the four main supplements or areas that, you know, children with ADHD could really benefit in is definitely a good quality fish oil to balance those omega three and omega six fatty acids.

There's so many studies out there supporting that, that that fish oil can improve memory, hyperactivity, clear thinking, behavioral disorders and organization skills in children.

Definitely a good quality probiotic. I mean, we've just talked about that gut brain connection. And so taking that probiotic and even eating foods that really support that gut health can have really, you know, great improvement in that detoxification pathways that I talked about earlier help with anxiety, mood.

Support. The body's sort of yeah. The body against those damaging mental and physical effects of stress.

Magnesium. You know, many parents find that magnesium makes a surprising difference with their kids anxiety, depression, mood, it it aids in sleep.

It also helps hyperactivity. There are many different types out there. I'm not going to go into that. I think that's a whole nother a whole nother session.

But, you know, there are a lot of, research studies that suggest children with ADHD often have low magnesium levels and so using supplementation and definitely have, a really great effect for that.

And then lastly, vitamin D, I mean, there's there's more. I mean, I could go on and on. But I, I know we don't have all day, vitamin D, sunshine vitamin can definitely work wonders in supporting children with ADHD, especially when you take it, in conjunction with those omega three fatty acids.

Diet, Supplements, and Lifestyle Support

Best way to get vitamin D is to get out in the sunshine. But if you live in Seattle like I do, it's not around very often. It is today, which is amazing.

And I'm going to get straight out there after after this. But another one to look at. Is, is your eye, is your iron? Low ferritin is also been linked to ADHD symptoms as well.

Yeah. No those are great list. I mean that's probably what I would say too, if I was going to, you know, name off, rattle off a couple of things that, that we can do.

And just like you said, you know, every kid is different. So you know what's going to work for one kid's not going to work for another. What what is low in one child might be, you know, not for another.

And for some kids with ADHD, it might have nothing to do with nutrients. So you can give them you can give them a thousand supplements. That is not going to make any difference. Exactly.

Or having that. So that's how we're working with a practitioner like you can come in handy because everyone's different. You might have to go to the history to figure out what's going on, do some lab testing, figure it out.

Now there are things that people can do themselves. Sure. I mean, you can think about doing things or work with your own practitioners, but if it's not working or or you want to be more individualized and have a better chance at success, then then that's going to be helpful.

Because the reality is, if you just give your kid, you know, a bunch of supplements like an Omega, like the things we said, that's probably not going to, you know, cure their ADHD, it might help a little bit.

I think it, you know, a lot of times, but that's not going to be where you want to get to. So I always say you can supplement your way out of a body riddled with inflammation, or you can't supplement your way out of a poor diet.

You know, it is this holistic approach. And, you know, I kind of look at, helping a kid with ADHD is like baking a pie. You you don't have to make the best pie ever, but you just want to make a good pie, okay?

And there are different ingredients in that. You know, the base is obviously super critical. That's the diet you've got the the filling. That's obviously super critical.

You can't have a pie without the filling can you. And so that's where you've got looking at those underlying stresses in the bodies at the gut brain connection.

Is it the neurotransmitters. Is it something else going on in the body. Is it, you know, vitamin and mineral deficiencies. And then you've got all these other little ingredients like chiropractic care, exercise.

I mean, exercise is probably one of the most researched things that help ADHD. So if your kid is sitting there on, screens all day long, get them outside, get them exercising, because that will definitely help.

Yeah. No, I definitely agree. And just like you said, you know, supplements, they're there to help boost things up. If, you know, if you're not, if you didn't have the best diet before and you want to move forward, then sometimes that can be helpful to kind of build things back up.

But if you're still not eating well then yeah, no supplements going replace what what we need to do. So yeah, I 100% of what you're saying with, I agree with and I don't need to repeat it because it is beautifully said.

But I think, you know, to finish up what, what I, I like to finish up with is, you know, maybe you can talk to parents if there's one thing that that they could do this week or today if they want to, you know, move in a different direction or make some, some changes.

What do you feel like if you were talking to your patients? You know, what would you tell them is something they should really think about doing today or this week to move the needle a little bit in the direction of a little bit healthier for their family?

Yeah. Look, I think, you know, as I said earlier, I just want to say Rome wasn't built in a day. You don't need to do everything in day one is just take that one step forward.

But I think a really great place is to look at artificial dyes and, it's a really good way to dip your toe in the water with dietary changes when it comes to reducing ADHD symptoms naturally.

And so, you know, turn that packet around. And if you say things like red 40 yellow five blue number one, it's really simple to look at those artificial dyes.

It's got the color and it's got a number. And if it says artificial dyes or artificial colors on the packet, just put it back on the shelf. Obviously it goes a little bit more than just dyes, but and flavors as well.

But start with dyes. The research out there just shows that it will increase hyperactivity in children that have ADHD and don't have ADHD. So, you know, just start to become more aware when you go to supermarket and you're about to put something in in your trolley, turn it around, look to see if you see those colors.

And if you do, just put it back on the shelf. Yeah. And that's that's a great tip. I mean, I think that, all that we've seen in recent research does have the most evidence at this point.

It's kind of crazy. It's still in a lot of our food, especially kids food. A lot of other places have outlawed all of it or most of it. So we're kind of behind on that.

Reducing Artificial Dyes and Finding More Help

And hopefully over the next few years, I don't that will happen. I think in California I saw that they did, some of it. So I guess red for me. Yeah. They've they banned it in California.

Obviously they've got, whatever they'll call it Red 39 then, you know, whatever. Yeah. They get around that with. Definitely. So it's starting to change.

But but slowly, very slowly. But it's slow to change. I mean, it's good that people are aware of it, but the reality is here it's not going to it's not going to change anytime.

That's going to be super helpful for most parents. So we got to just do it ourselves and just be aware of it, like you said, and just, just don't buy those products.

And if nobody if everyone stopped buying the products, the company just stopped making it anyways. So that's

that's the way to make a change here, I think.

But yeah, yeah. Thank you for sharing all your wisdom and knowledge. I think everyone's got to go eat a pie. Now that we talked about. But maybe you can share before we go just where people can find you if they want, you know, to learn more, take any of your programs.

Yeah, definitely. They can find more about working with me at my website, which is ADHD Thrive institute.com. I'm on Instagram, Facebook and other social platforms at ADHD at Thrive Institute.

Yeah, but just a wonderful platform. So much information and knowledge, especially if you have a child with, with ADHD or, you know, hyperactivity or learning issues.

It's a great place to start and to really get a plan of of where you can go, and hopefully to change the trajectory of their health and improve things a little bit.

So again, thank you for being here and thanks so much to all. This has been a pleasure. But Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks. We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health.

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