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Second Opinions

Wrong to refer

I trust that Laura Rongé, in her recent article concerning learning disabilities (LD), erred in stating, "If LD is suspected, patients should be referred to specialists for screening." ("Halting downward spiral into frustration and failure," September AAP News)

The fact is that the vast majority of LD children are well taken care of by general pediatricians in concert with the local school systems (teachers, psychologists, social workers, etc.) and the parents. The less these children are involved with neuro-psycho-education specialists, the less they will worry that something is wrong with their brains and the better they will succeed.

Robert J. Snow, M.D., FAAP
Seaford, NY

Rewarding illegitimacy

We recently saw a two-month-old baby girl in our pediatric practice who was born with a serious deformity of one of her legs. This unfortunate child will probably require several surgical procedures and extensive rehabilitation. Her young parents are married and have health insurance, but their insurance policy will not cover this condition. They applied for Medicaid benefits, but were turned down.

This type of situation is not uncommon. These parents made proper and responsible decisions. If they had conceived a healthy child out of wedlock, they would immediately and automatically be entitled to several programs including Medicaid, WIC, subsidized housing and cash assistance.

How much longer will we tolerate a welfare system that rewards illegitimacy and irresponsibility but denies aid to truly needy people?

Rodney N. Kreider, M.D., FAAP
Forest Park, GA

Explosive combination

I am absolutely sure that many adults and their children, affected with ADHD and Tourette syndrome, are an explosive combination. I'll be disappointed, but not surprised, if I don't find this dealt with in your special violence-prevention issue in October.

Carroll W. Wheeler, M.D., FAAP
Greeley, CO

Cult of the Child

Having been raised in another era – the 1950s and 1960s – I recall a discussion in class about a statue in a village somewhere in the U.S.S.R., and of some children who had earned their famed status by turning in to the Stalinist authorities their parents, whom they had overheard expressing anti-Communist ideas.

The lessons for my class: It is the nature

of governments to be corrupt and authoritative. It is the strength of the family that is the best defense against tyranny. It is the strategy of totalitarian governments to recruit and indoctrinate children to break the unity of the family and thereby extend their tyranny.

Now comes the United Nations and the hierarchy of the American Academy of Pediatrics to inform us that in the course of a single generation, the entire historical relationship between government and the governed has changed. The family is now the source of corruption and exploitation, and the government is the source of knowledge, compassion and virtue. Oh, brave new world!

The workings of the U.N. Committee on Rights of the Child are contained in a series of press releases available through the United Nations web page (<http://www.un.org>, "New on the Web," U.N. Press Releases, "child rights" full text search). The opinions expressed by the committee members, as they review the reports of the various states who have become parties to the Convention, reveal the underlying agenda of this panel of 18 (recently expanded from 10) child experts.

As is illustrated in the reports, parents have no independent legitimacy. A family exists to promote the rights of the child. There is no gradual incorporation of a child into a society of reciprocal rights and responsibilities. The narcissistic tendencies of childhood are not only unquestioned, they are enshrined.

Are we allowed to have expectations of our children? No. Education must not emphasize success in higher academics, but rather, human development. The leisure time and recreation of children must be legally guaranteed. Any form of corporal punishment should be outlawed.

Are we allowed to have cultural differences consistent with our individual heritage? No. The expert panel has concluded that the welfare of children requires an ideal, standardized approach, which supersedes any concept of the welfare of adults or societies.

In short, the child ceases to be a human being. He is an adored object, above the restrictions and responsibilities of society. We have the Cult of the Child. And we have the United Nations Committee on Rights of the Child, High Priests of the Cult.

Will the convention protect Third World children? The countries of Southeast Asia do not need a treaty to stop child prostitution. The countries of Africa do not need a treaty to stop handing 10-year-olds AK-46s. Brazil does not need a treaty to stop the police from shooting street children. Just like our own government, which does not need a constitutional amendment to balance the budget, what's lacking is the will. I fear that the signing of the convention will be viewed as an "action" by these governments while children's lives are not materially improved.

Will the convention help U.S. children? There is no inherent difference to the convention between clitoral excision on the one hand and dragging a kid to Sunday School when he'd rather watch cartoons on the other. In as complex and pluralistic a society as we have here, in which there is never a shortage of opinion and controversy over the "child's best interests," is it realistic to believe that this diversity can and should be resolved by delegated authority in the hands of a small group of internationals?

The American Academy of Pediatrics has a proud history of child advocacy through parental support and education using techniques of reason and example. This shows respect for the intelligence and morality of the American family. The Academy has been a strong advocate of the scientific approach to knowledge, encouraging research and spirited discussion. This shows respect for the broad spectrum of human experience and reason.

The Convention on the Rights of Child discards reason and example and has no respect for the broad spectrum of experience, instead relying on coerced compliance from above as dictated by a select panel of international "superexperts."

I believe that support of the Convention on the Rights of the Child represents a refutation of the best traditions of the United States and the American Academy of Pediatrics. I believe that we risk losing our credibility and legitimacy as advocates for children and for families.

I plead with AAP members to obtain a copy of the document (1-800-253-9646, document E.91151 92-1-100465-9, \$5 + \$5 S&H), read it, think about its implications, and act according to their consciences.

William Grimes, M.D., FAAP
Houston, TX

Threat to the family

According to an article by Marilyn Elias in the May 15 edition of *USA Today*, the Academy has taken the position that "teen-agers should be able to get legal abortions without their parents' knowledge or permission."

The news article was a response to the AAP policy statement developed by the AAP Committee on Adolescence (COA), "The Adolescent's Right to Confidential Care When Considering Abortion" (May 1996 *Pediatrics*).

Within the text of the policy statement, it states that the Academy, for two decades, has been on record as supporting the access of minors to all options regarding undesired pregnancy, including the right to obtain an abortion. In this statement, COA quotes statistics from a 1990 survey of 785 AAP members about their views on adolescent abortion.

This survey states that 51 percent of all pediatricians said there should not be laws