

ADHD and Ritalin: neuronarratives in a virtual community of Facebook Social Network

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Abstract

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is notable for affecting between 5% and 10% of the child and adolescent populations in several continents. The main treatment for this is methylphenidate (Ritalin). In this context, the objective of this research was to understand how the contents transmitted in social networks (virtual communities) influence the way family members of these communities understand ADHD and its treatment, as well as how they deal with their children who are suspected of having, or are already diagnosed with, ADHD. The research was developed from the standpoint of Medical Anthropology. Virtual ethnography was chosen as the research methodology to observe a virtual community from the social network Facebook. The virtual community investigated consisted mainly of mothers of children and adolescents diagnosed with ADHD, and it was observed that they mainly discuss the use of medication (Ritalin or Concerta) to treat ADHD in their children. The narratives show that it causes a lot of anxiety in some mothers to give their children controlled substances. We live in an age in which the vicissitudes of life have been pathologised. As a result, parental suffering, as caused by the difficulties of dealing with their children, leads to the idea that medical solutions are necessary for them to alleviate their children's conditions.