

# Keeping Informed

*“If you do not ask the right questions, you do not get the right answers. A question asked in the right way often points to its own answer.”*

– Edward Hodnett

Information about AD/HD is constantly changing. Research publications, popular press and Web sites present new information every day. The more information classroom teachers have about the nature, effects and treatments of AD/HD, the more able they will be to have a positive impact on students. In order to get the most out of the information, teachers need to know what questions to ask, where to look for answers, who to contact and how to assess the reliability of information sources.

## Choosing issues to research

Seek information on a diversity of topics, from instructional strategies to alternative treatments. Try brainstorming a list of possible issues. For example, what are key signs of AD/HD? How does AD/HD affect learning and behaviour? What are the controversial issues? Are some treatments more credible than others? Write down questions and use them as a starting point for research.

Narrow the question by first making a list of general issues or questions and then paring down the issues to the most important ones. Try to specify exactly what the key question is. For example:

- How do AD/HD characteristics affect the choice of instructional strategies?
- How might this student benefit from assistive technology for learning?
- What are some ways to support this student's reading and writing skills?
- What is the relationship between the student's learning disability and his or her AD/HD symptoms?

## Finding information

- People can be excellent resources. People to consider include colleagues, community agencies, professionals in the field and librarians.
- Print resources can provide a variety of information. Newspapers, magazines and periodicals are accessible and current sources for general information. Your local library's copy of the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* or the *Canadian Periodical Index* will provide the names of relevant publications. Other printed material—such as books, pamphlets, annual reports and newsletters from relevant organizations—can provide information of a general nature that may help to direct your inquiry. For a list of books for teachers, see Appendix B-3 and the bibliography on pages 165–170.
- Television, video and other digital resources provide information on both general and specific topics and issues related to AD/HD.

B-3

## Using the Internet

The Internet has a huge amount of information about almost every topic imaginable. The cautionary note to any user of the Internet is that you must check the reliability of the source. Online resources are often linked through a library's home page to other virtual online resources; going from the library's Web site out into the Internet can save time and ensure more reliability.

Internet services include the World Wide Web, chat rooms, live events using video and audio, mailing lists, newsgroups, Web forums and e-mail to write to your contacts.

A search engine is an index of information on the Internet. Search engines conduct searches using keywords. The best way to choose the word or words to use is to select the rarest word in the phrase. For example, instead of typing “types of AD/HD medication,” you would simply use “AD/HD medication” for the search.

The following is a list of commonly-used search engines.

- [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- [www.ask.com](http://www.ask.com)
- [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com)
- [www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com)
- [www.beaucoup.com](http://www.beaucoup.com)
- [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)
- [www.journalismnet.com](http://www.journalismnet.com)
- [www.dogpile.com](http://www.dogpile.com) (presents information taken from a number of search engines)

Different search engines access different areas of the Web, so use three or four different ones.

Consider accessing media sites, such as [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca), [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) and [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com).

## Evaluating Internet information

Anyone can set up a Web site and offer information. Because of the range of material available on the Internet, from fiction to opinion to fact, it is up to the user to evaluate the source of information. It is essential to assess the author’s credentials and the quality of the publication or Web site, determine if the material has been reviewed before publication, and consider the comprehensiveness and the tone of the material.

## Checking reliability of sources

Use the 4Ws + H to evaluate the source of information. Consider the following questions.

- **Who** is the author? Where does the author work? At a recognized institution or government? Have other people mentioned the author? For Web sites, is the author or organization clearly stated?

- **What** is the purpose of the source? Who is the audience? Is the information factual or propaganda—does the author use facts or emotions to get the point across? Is the purpose of the Web site to sell or promote a product or service?
- **When** was the material created? For print material, check the publication date and whether this is a first edition or a revision of the material. For a Web site, check whether links still work and look at the last time the site was updated. Older material may present information and statistics that are out-of-date.
- **Where** was the source published or created? Is the publisher or journal reputable? Is the journal reviewed? Books or periodicals that are self-published may have a hidden agenda. For Web sites, certain domain names may indicate a greater reliability. For example, the ending “.edu” signifies an American university and “.gov” is reserved for the Canadian government, both of which are reliable sources.
- **How** can I tell if the source is accurate? Double-check sources by comparing the facts and ideas presented in them to those presented in other sources. Consider whether the source might be biased or uninformed. Authors or Web sites might be speaking about something that is beyond their level of expertise. They may have used unreliable sources in the first place and passed this information on to you. Or they may have hidden agendas; for example, they may be trying to sell you a product. If the material is a book, look for a review of the book to determine how others have assessed it.

### Comparing sources

The more information you have on a topic, the better your understanding of the issue will be. As a general guideline, try to gather information from at least three sources. Some of the information may be contradictory or not provide support. With controversial issues where people have taken sides, it is up to you to determine if the research is reliable and if it supports research conclusions.

### Evaluating medical information<sup>27</sup>

It is important to approach media reports of medical advances with some healthy scepticism. The following questions will assist in evaluating reports of health care options.

- What is the source of the information?
- Who is the authority?

27. Adapted from Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, “Complementary and Alternative Treatments,” What We Know Information Sheet #6, *National Resource Centre on AD/HD*, October 2003, [www.help4adhd.org/documents/WWK6.pdf](http://www.help4adhd.org/documents/WWK6.pdf) (Accessed May 2006).

- Who funded the research?
- Is the finding preliminary or confirmed?

In addition, ask the following questions about AD/HD treatments that are reported in the media or elsewhere.

- Have clinical trials (scientific tests of the effectiveness and safety of a treatment using consenting human subjects) been conducted regarding the approach? What are the results?
- Can the public obtain information about the approach from the National Institute of Mental Health's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) (<http://nccam.nih.gov>)?
- Is there a national organization of practitioners? Are there licensing and accreditation requirements for practitioners of this treatment?
- Is the treatment reimbursed by health insurance?

## Contacting community agencies and associations

Associations and community agencies can be a good source of information and resources. Make contact by phone, e-mail or letter to find out more about their services or ask for specific information. Some agencies to contact include:

- CHADD—Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (national and local chapters)
- Learning Disabilities Association (national, provincial and local chapters)
- Calgary Learning Centre.

## Ongoing search

Teaching, like learning, is a journey that does not end. This resource provides current information classroom teachers can use to support students with AD/HD, but it is just a starting point. Ensuring students with AD/HD are successful learners requires that teachers continually increase their knowledge, share their expertise and build collaborative relationships with students, parents and professionals working with these students.

