

Letter to the Editor

Response to 'Lack of studies investigating the association of childhood eczema, sleeping problems and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder' letter by J. Schmitt and M. Romanos

Editor,

We agree with Drs Schmitt and Romanos that eczema is a profound example of a disorder which in a large part has an atopic background (AE). Also we agree that co-morbidity of AE and ADHD frequently occurs. However, AE is not necessarily a cause of ADHD despite the fact that symptoms of ADHD can worsen during flare-up of AE. This is reminiscent of the fact that ADHD diagnosis is a symptom complex (a syndrome) and not a real causative diagnosis. The very fact that when AE is under control and consequently the behavioural problems will disappear, implies that these children were not suffering from ADHD but showed ADHD-like symptoms caused by AE. Thus, we are not with the opinion that ADHD may be caused by AE, but rather that AE can result in ADHD-like symptoms. As stated by these authors, also artificial colours and food additives contribute to the development of hyperactive behaviour and ADHD-like symptoms not only

in children suffering from ADHD but in all children (1). Avoidance of these additives and curing AE will diminish these symptoms, but real ADHD will remain in affected children. Further studies to the causes of ADHD are thus imperative.

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Reference

1. MCCANN D, BARRETT A, COOPER A, et al. Food additives and hyperactive behaviour in 3-year-old and 8/9-year-old children in the community: a randomised, double-blinded, placebo-controlled trial. *Lancet* 2007; 370: 1560–7.