

17 April 2025

## To World Health Organization (WHO) Expert Committee on Selection and Use of Essential Medicines

### Re: Application reference "A.19 Methylphenidate – attention deficit hyperactivity disorder"

Considering the evidence of serious harm to children and adolescents connected with the prescription of methylphenidate I strongly recommend *against* the inclusion of the drug in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines.

Vital data from the Swedish Poisons Information Center (Giftinformationscentralen, GIC) presents alarming signals about *Suicidality* in connection with the prescription of methylphenidate drugs.

In 2024 alone **112** children and adolescents (10-19) were acutely taken to hospital in Sweden for "overdoses of methylphenidate with a self-destructive/suicidal intent". These cases are to be considered serious, requiring hospital care.

For the last three years **327** unique such cases have been reported to the Swedish Poisons Information Center; all reported by physicians/health care personnel.

It is to be noted that there is a heavy increase in these cases of *suicidality*, *parallel* to the increased prescription of methylphenidate. In 2016 we saw **54** such reported cases. Since 2016 the prescription rate for methylphenidate for 10-19 has increased with **86** percent in Sweden. It is further to be noted that around **80** percent of these cases are females. Among females the increase in prescription has been **150** percent since 2016.

These serious cases contradicts the statements about the drug being "safe". It can be convenient for proponents for the inclusion of these drugs on the WHO list to blame these serious conditions on the children themselves, saying that *suicidality* is inherent in the ADHD disorder itself. I find this way of shifting blame from the drug to the children a disastrous way of handling safety data.

I want to conclude by quoting one of the most regarded ADHD experts in the world, James Swanson, who in the recent review article "*Have We Been Thinking About A.D.H.D. All Wrong?*" in the New York Times Magazine, 13 April 2025, summarizes what the longest and most comprehensive ADHD study, the MTA Study, of which he was part, has shown about stimulant drugs:

"... there is no long-term effect. The only long-term effect that I know of has been the suppression of growth. If you're honest, you should tell kids that, look, if you're interested in next week or next month or even the next year, this is the right treatment for you. But in the long run, you're going to be shorter. How many kids would agree to take medication? Probably none."

Sincerely,

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Sweden