

# Learning to cope with childhood disorders

## New clinic treats ADD, ADHD and other ailments

By Antonia Hannon Ehlers  
Contributing Editor

Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin and Nelson Rockefeller had it. So does business mogul Charles Schwab. Although each of these men became a great success, each struggled with Attention Deficit Disorder.

Symptoms of ADD include procrastination, easy distractibility, trouble with relationships and the inability to focus on certain activities. People with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder suffer from the same symptoms as ADD, plus hyperactivity.

ADD and ADHD are caused by a chemical imbalance of the brain, where there is a decrease in dopamine and norepinephrine.

"About 10 percent of the population has ADD," said Dr. Harry Verby, who recently opened the Behavioral Medical Clinic in San Mateo, which treats ADD, ADHD and related mood disorders. "ADD and ADHD affect children and adults," Dr. Verby added. "My oldest patient is a 64 year-old Catholic nun. I see ADD and ADHD similar to poor Internet access. The brain is a computer, and people with ADD and ADHD have trouble getting 'online' and staying 'online' to complete a task. They excel at subjects they like, but shut off with subjects they don't like."

ADD and ADHD often occur in association with other disorders, including anxiety, depression, conduct disorder, speech and language delays and other learning disabilities.

"If you take 100 people with ADD, about 25 percent suffer from other anxiety syndromes," Dr. Verby noted. "Another 25 percent suffer from depression, and 35 percent from conduct disorder. Other related disorders include anorexia and bulimia."

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, ADD and ADHD are the most common neurobehavioral disorders of childhood. Children with ADD usually experience significant problems in school, such as procrastination, boredom, impulsiveness, low self-esteem, difficulty with interpersonal relationships, risk-taking behavior and academic underachievement.

The American Journal of Pediatrics offers the following questions to heighten attention about ADD and ADHD, and as an initial screening for school performance:

- How is your child doing in school?
- Are there any problems with learning that you or the teacher have seen?
- Is your child happy in school?
- Are you concerned with any behavioral problems in school, at home or when you child is playing with friends?

- Is your child having problems completing class work or homework?

Symptoms may continue into adolescence and adult life. However, the good news is that ADD and ADHD can be treated with counseling and medications such as Ritalin and Adderall.

"People with ADD and ADHD don't have enough chemicals in the brain," Dr. Verby explained. "But the right drugs, such as Ritalin, Adderall and atypical antidepressants are safe and have minimal side effects. The odds are that 80 to 90 percent of the problems can be solved. Most people report within two weeks they have never felt better."



Member of the Solomon family of San Mateo have been treated for ADD, depression and dyslexia. Their doctor, Harry Verby, has helped many local families overcome such disorders.

### Life changes

"I had no idea we could be helped to function better," said Cindy Solomon, the mother of three children—ages 11, 9 and 6—treated by Dr. Verby since September. "Dr. Verby approached us holistically, within in the context of family dynamics. He is incredibly personable and insightful. In fact, Dr. Verby has become a member of our extended family."

Solomon, a resident of San Mateo, describes her family as "all highly functioning, Type A people." Her husband, Burt, is a software engineer, while Cindy has worked for various start-up companies in Silicon Valley.

"We have benefited from counseling as a family," she said. "Since working with Dr. Verby, we have identified issues and have seen immediate progress. Issue including ADD, depression and dyslexia have been addressed. Counseling and medication have changed the Solomons' way of life.

Cindy, who is notorious for "multi-tasking", said she has learned to slow down and enjoy life.

"Before, I was not enjoying everything I do," she explained. "I was so busy and so driven to be constantly active. I didn't enjoy the moment and realize there is another level of satisfaction. Now, I've learned to take time and be more patient. I am happy and I have found balance."

Cindy's daughter, Joy, 11, enjoys her sessions with Dr. Verby. "He's really funny," she said. "A lot of doctors just talk about medical stuff. But he makes jokes I understand and it's really fun

to see him."

### In the mood

In addition to treating ADD and ADHD, Dr. Verby treats a broad spectrum of mood disorders. San Mateo resident Wendy Jentsch went through years of heartache, as her son, Ethan, struggled with relationships and discipline problems in school. "It was a horrendous situation," she recounted. "We experienced so many years of incredible frustration. We saw so many so-called 'big, wonderful specialists' and every one of them missed what was really going on until we met Dr. Verby. My son is bipolar, and today he has a chance at a successful life because of Dr. Verby. Those other doctors told me my son would never have a chance at a normal life. I cried myself to sleep every night for weeks. I thought he would be stuck in an institution. But we proved them wrong. Dr. Verby changed my son's life."

Ethan's defiant behavior began as early as age 4. As the years progressed, he regularly was in trouble at school for aggression, tantrums and fighting.

"Every morning used to be a major meltdown, with yelling and screaming," Ethan's mom said. "Then we met Dr. Verby, who correctly diagnosed Ethan as being bipolar and used a special technique of layering medications. Today, I can't remember the last time we had a bad morning. Dr. Verby has been there every step of the way for me."

The Glaser family of Foster City first noticed behavioral problems with their oldest son when he was 4.

"He is really smart, bright and relates well to adults," Karen Glaser said. "But he didn't relate well to children. We weren't sure what the problem was."

The little boy, now 8, bounced from doctor to doctor, as his frustrated parents tried their best to obtain a diagnosis. For three years, the Glasers' son struggled in school, lacked concentration, was disruptive and took risks. It wasn't until they met Dr. Verby last year that things changed.

"We met Dr. Verby one night for two and-a-half hours, and he did magic tricks," Karen Glaser said. "He figured it out immediately that our son was bipolar with comorbidity (additional issues). He was leveled out very quickly, and there has been a 98 percent improvement."

The Glasers' youngest son was diagnosed with ADHD. Both boys' conditions are under control today.

"Dr. Verby layered medications, which solved a lot of problems," Karen Glaser said. "We had tried several different methods—such as considering diet and the negative effects of sleep deprivation - as well as several medications that were not effective. The good news is that being bipolar or having ADHD can be treated. Parents should not put all the blame on them selves; these disorders have more to do with a chemical imbalance than with parenting skills. With treatment, we have seen a lot of change in our family dynamics. Life today is certainly less stressful."

## High point in fine dining

The new '231 Ellsworth' in San Mateo



Reflections of art  
Peninsula artists on display all month



## Endangered species

How you can help preserve nature



SAN MATEO WEEKLY

SERVING SAN MATEO FOR 13 YEARS

# THE INDEPENDENT

13TH YEAR, NO. 11

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2001

## Pediatrician leaves practice for new challenge

By Antonia Hannon Ehlers  
Contributing Editor

Anyone who knows Dr. Harry Verby instantly associates the pediatrician with puppets, cards, magic tricks, literary quotes and a keen sense of humor.

"My style is whimsical," Dr. Verby said. "It relaxes children and distracts them from being scared. It also relieves reflex opposition and levels the playing field."

The popular doctor recently retired from a 30-year career in San Mateo for a new challenge—a special practice called the Behavioral Medical Clinic of San Mateo. The new clinic focuses on ADD, ADHD and mood-related disorders in children and adults.

"I'll miss my patients a lot, but hope to keep in touch," said Dr. Verby, whose 4000-plus patients live as far north as Marin County and as south as Santa Cruz. "I'm always S" available to answer questions."

During Dr. Verby's years as a pediatrician, he always had a special interest in ADD, ADHD and other mood/behavioral disorders. He took many post-graduate courses and studied with national and international pioneers of the behavioral science field.

"I've always had an interest in unraveling these problems," Dr. Verby said. "So many children fall through the cracks because of the wrong diagnosis. These disorders can lead to more serious problems in later life—including marital stress, trouble with interpersonal relationships and substance abuse. The key is early diagnosis. If these disorders are detected early, a lot of this can be prevented."

Dr. Verby is from the old school of doctors who know patients personally and spend as much time as needed to answer questions and concerns. For the last 10 years, he has been disenchanted by HMO insurance snags. "It has been demoralizing,

## NEWSMAKER

to a degree, the financial squeeze for profit of corporate HMOs," Dr. Verby said.

Dr. Verby was born in the Bronx, NY. It was an early bout with strep throat that influenced Dr. Verby's decision to become a pediatrician.

"I had a fever of 105 and felt in like I was going to die," Dr. Verby remembered. "I was hallucinating, seeing spiders on the wall. In those days, doctors made house calls. My doctor gave me penicillin and I felt dramatically better within 12 hours. It was so powerful and I was so grateful. Dr. Berger was very kind. He was magical, and I thought, 'Boy, isn't he something?'"



Verby

Dr. Verby laid the ground work for his future career at the Bronx High School of Science. He graduated from State University New York at Buffalo in 1965 with his medical degree.

"I wanted to go into pediatrics because kids bounce back," Dr. Verby said. "Children are honest and have soul and spunk. They care and they're a challenge. They also have hope."

Dr. Verby moved to the Bay Area in 1965 to complete an internship at U.C. San Francisco. After two years there, he completed his residency in pediatrics at Stanford Medical School. "I have maintained a strong loyalty to both schools," he said.

From 1968-70, Dr. Verby served two years as a doctor in the U.S. Air Force. He worked as chief of pediatrics at a 100-bed hospital in Florida.

"That experience quelled any thoughts of going into research," Dr. Verby said. "I liked the busy pace and the diversity."

A twist of fate occurred in 1970, when Dr. Verby came across an job advertisement for a pediatrician in San Mateo at the practice of doctors Leo Bell, Hilton Atherton and Richard

Peters.

"I spoke to Dr. Bell and he asked me how soon I could come out there," Dr. Verby remembered. "I said, 'How about tomorrow?'" Dr. Verby was hired on the spot, and so began a 30-year career in San Mateo. He went on to become chief of pediatrics at Mills-Peninsula Hospitals and an assistant clinical professor at U.C. S. F.

"We just clicked," said Dr. Verby of his former partners, who later welcomed doctors Steve Rubenstein and Patricia Soong. In 1986, the practice moved to its current building, 50 S. San Mateo Drive, and was renamed ABC Pediatrics.

"Dr. Verby symbolized to me a childhood story of everything you would ever want a pediatrician to be," said Hillsborough resident Diane Klein, the mother of four grown children. "He treated my whole family. Dr. Verby was a mentor and a dear, dear friend."

"My biggest regret was that he couldn't have been my doctor, too," Klein added. "I have never felt more comfortable or confident with a doctor. If I had my way, Dr. Verby would be the primary care physician on all of our medical cards." Klein's children loved Dr. Verby so much that they continued to see him into their 20s—until they reluctantly switched to "adult" doctors.

"I always felt safe with Dr. Verby," said Klein's daughter, Tiffany, 23, who hopes to become a pediatrician. "I always understood what Dr. Verby said, it was never scary. He made me laugh. I hope to have the same kind of rapport with my patients one day."

Dr. Verby lives in San Mateo. He has two grown sons, Eric and Joel, and a daughter, Lauren. In his free time, the doctor plays jazz piano at San Mateo restaurants Brio and Bogie's.

See otherside for  
ADD, ADHD Article...

# f SAN francisco

A Very Healthy Issue

JANUARY 2001

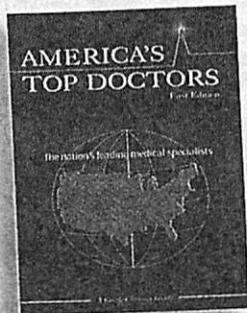
# OUR 500 MOST TRUSTED PHYSICIANS

THOUSANDS OF BAY AREA MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS WERE ASKED WHICH DOCTORS THEY'D TRUST WITH THEIR OWN FAMILY. HERE ARE THEIR TOP CHOICES.

IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST OF US, you'll scan this list A) because you're looking for advice on choosing a new doctor or B) because you want to see if your own doctors made the cut. Dr. John Connolly, whose New York-based research company, Castle Connolly Medical, provided these names, guesses the latter—especially considering this is California, the birthplace of managed care. "It's incredible, the deep impact that's had on the community there," Connolly says. "Every-

body tends to think there's less choice. It's a perception, and I think it's a problematic one, because even in managed care you get to choose." So consider this a list of winners, yes, but also an indispensable guide to getting the best health care you can in the Bay Area. The following primary care doctors and specialists were selected by their colleagues and peers—doctors, nurses, and hospital administrators—in an extensive ten-month survey conducted for a book due out late this year, *Top Doctors: San Francisco Bay Area*. Our list is a sneak preview of that book. (Castle Connolly's new nationwide physicians guide, *America's Top*

*Doctors*, arrives this month.) Researchers started the survey in 1999 by sending about 10,000 questionnaires to doctors throughout the Bay Area, asking them a simple question: To which doctors would you send a member of your family? Nominees were sought in every area of primary care and specialty. Top nominees were screened for board certification and scrutinized further through a round of extensive phone interviews, until researchers arrived at roughly 3,000 doctors for the Bay Area book. Castle Connolly's physician-led team then took another pass at the list to provide us with the top 500. Dr. Connolly knows as well as we do that some great doctors, including yours, might not appear on the following pages. But 500 outstanding ones do.



**Charlene G. Shough**  
Good Sam San Jose  
(408) 268-4900  
endocrinology

**M. Lee Stone**  
O'Connor Hospital  
(408) 295-8988  
allergy

**Jeffrey T.G. Tan**  
Mills Peninsula  
(650) 259-5050

**Eli Taub**  
Kaiser Santa Clara  
(650) 903-3020

**Harry D. Verby** New Ph.#  
850-344-2704  
Mills Peninsula  
(650) 579-6500  
behavioral medicine

**Jelena Vukicevic**  
Stanford Med Ctr  
(650) 329-0300  
premature babies

**PEDIATRIC CARDIOLOGY**  
**Jesse Allen Tannenbaum**  
Kaiser Santa Clara  
(408) 236-6450  
preventive care

**PULMONARY DISEASE**  
**Donald L. Posthumus**  
Good Sam San Jose  
(408) 358-3528

**Jagat B. Satia**  
Good Sam San Jose  
(408) 358-2631

## >SPECIALISTS

**ALLERGY/IMMUNOLOGY**  
**Joann C. Blessing-Moore**  
Stanford Med Ctr  
(650) 696-8236  
cystic fibrosis

**Steven W. Rubinstein**  
Camino Med Grp  
(408) 730-4390  
preventive care

**ANESTHESIOLOGY**  
**Michael W. Champeau**  
Stanford Med Ctr  
(650) 323-0617  
pediatrics

**CARDIOLOGY**  
**Sharon A. Hunt**  
Stanford Med Ctr  
(650) 723-5771  
post-transplant

**Robert Coleman Master**  
Camino Med Grp  
(408) 730-4280  
interventional cardiology

**Ronald Mark Rossen**  
Los Gatos Comm Hosp  
(408) 358-3939

**Ingela Schnittger**  
Stanford Med Ctr  
(650) 723-5196  
noninvasive imaging

**John S. Schroeder**  
Stanford Med Ctr  
(650) 723-5561  
heart failure