

# Scientology Group Fuels Debate Over Use of Ritalin

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Doubts about Ritalin, a drug used to help hyperactive children concentrate, have drawn the attention of lawyers and reporters and prompted some parents to halt treatment. But The Associated Press has found the firestorm is being fanned by a group with ties to the Church of Scientology and a history of opposition to psychiatry. In the first story of a three-day series, 'R' Is for Ritalin, the AP examines the group's role in the Ritalin furor.)

By FRED BAYLES  
And SCOTT McCARTNEY  
Associated Press Writers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Twelve-page pink pamphlets are being handed out on street corners across the country, sounding frightening alarms in bold-face type about Ritalin, a prescription drug used for three decades to calm hyperactive children.

WARNING: Ritalin can lead to suicide.

WARNING: Ritalin can be addictive.

WARNING: Ritalin overdose can cause death.

In newspaper stories, on talk shows, at medical conventions, news conferences and neighborhood meetings, the group behind the pamphlets makes other claims — that Ritalin is as dangerous as cocaine, causes delinquency and crime, is given to 80 percent of children in some Maryland schools, even that psychiatrists advocate putting it in school drinking water supplies.

Researchers and government regulators looking into the legitimate worries about misuse or over-prescription of Ritalin ridicule these "facts" as distortions and exaggerations of their work. Because the claims are constantly recycled without qualification or context, they say, parents are panicking unnecessarily.

"Ritalin is a safe, effective drug. I don't know of any major problems with it," said Dr. Paul Leber, director of neuropharmacological products at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The anti-Ritalin campaign is run from a sparsely furnished second-story office here decorated with pictures of L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology, and staffed by people wearing "Psychiatry Kills" sweatshirts.

It is the headquarters of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a 19-year-old organization sponsored by the Scientologists, the contentious religious group based just down the street.

The campaign, complete with toll-free hotline, has made CCHR's president, Dennis Clarke, a 41-year-old member of the Scientology church, perhaps the most quoted Ritalin expert in the country.

It has taken the group coast to coast whenever a Ritalin case catches public attention, be it a trial in Massachusetts, conferences in Minnesota and Texas, or the filing of at least 13 lawsuits.

"Ritalin acts as a chemical strait-jacket," Clarke said in an interview with The Associated Press, repeating an oft-quoted claim. "We are not dealing with a lightweight drug, but parents are told it's like vitamins."

What is not always clear in CCHR-supplied information is the group's ties to the Scientologists and that church's predisposition against the mental health profession. Since its inception in 1969, CCHR has attacked psychiatry, centering on treatments such as electric shock and drugs.

Its latest goal, Clarke said, is to use lawsuits to bring about a ban on Ritalin, which he calls "one of the most dangerous and addictive substances known to man."

This fervor, medical experts say, is slanting the debate on Ritalin use.

"It's been wild, absolutely wild, really bizarre," said Dr. Jerry Wiener, president of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. "Something calls itself the Citizens Commission on Human Rights and all of a sudden it gets a lot of credibility, and they're being quoted without any kind of substantiation."

Ritalin has enjoyed success in treating children with a condition now widely known as attention deficit disorder. It reacts chemically to help calm their fidgeting, ease their impulsive, sometimes destructive behavior, and focus their attention so they do better in school.

Yet no one denies that Ritalin, a drug classified with amphetamines, must be used carefully. Although its acknowledged side effects are mostly mild and passing, doctors say children taking the drug must be closely monitored and counseled. And some share worries with CCHR that Ritalin is being improperly urged on parents by teachers and schools.

Its sharply increased use is indicated by the number of prescriptions filled, which rose 14 percent from 1983 to 1986; prescriptions for most drugs increase about 1 percent a year, according to federal statistics.

"I have a concern about overuse and abuse where the drug is used alone," Wiener said. "When any drug begins to be known as effective, you have to be careful about overuse — like Valium and Librium."

In the rush to reexamine Ritalin's role, much press attention has focused on the lawsuits filed on behalf of distressed parents.

But most stories fail to note that of the 13 suits in California, Minnesota,

Massachusetts, Georgia and the District of Columbia, one is being handled by CCHR's counsel and the others were filed by two lawyers who get Ritalin data — and sometimes clients — through CCHR.

"They are very efficient and a wealth of information," said one of those lawyers, John Coale, who has represented victims of the Bhopal, India, cyanide gas disaster and the DuPont Plaza Hotel fire in Puerto Rico.

Some of the suits accuse not only pediatricians or psychiatrists of wrongdoing, but also teachers and school districts involved in children's treatment.

"The only thing that will turn this around is the same thing that turned around exploding Pintos and Thalidomide — and that's major, major multi-million-dollar lawsuits," Clarke said. "Unfortunately, that means suing schools as well as psychiatrists."

At the heart of the Ritalin dispute are the claims and data used by CCHR. Among its questioned statements:

— Clarke often says 4 million American children are taking Ritalin, four times as many as estimated by the most liberal researchers. When asked for his source, Clarke cited a specific newspaper story. When it was pointed out that the article makes no mention of 4 million children, Clarke replied, "I don't know how many. I just know it's too many."

— Clarke frequently asserts that 80 percent of the students in a Maryland school system are taking Ritalin. Asked to identify the system, he amended his assertion to just one school and said the information came from an attorney who handles Ritalin suits. Asked about the attorney's sources, Clarke cited an unidentified parent told by an unidentified neurologist.

Clarke said he repeats the 80 percent figure because he believes it's true. "There's enough of it there (in Maryland) to have them all on it," he said.

— Clarke says Ritalin may have caused a 600-percent increase in child suicide over five years. He cites

medical manual warnings that suicide is a complication of withdrawal from drugs such as Ritalin. But doctors say the danger is minimal when the drug is used properly.

"I have children who go off of it every weekend," said Dr. Ralph S. Smith Jr., a Charleston, W. Va., child psychiatrist. "I have children who go off every summer because they only need it during school." Nevertheless, Smith said, three of his ADD patients stopped taking Ritalin after their parents read an article highlighting CCHR claims.

— CCHR refers to a California study which, Clarke asserts, shows

children treated with Ritalin commit more felonies later in life. The study's author, Dr. James Satterfield, says that is a complete misreading.

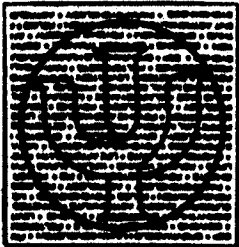
Satterfield, a psychiatrist and director of the National Center for Hyperactive Children in Encino, Calif., and his wife, psychologist Breena Satterfield, studied 130 hyperactive boys, all of whom received Ritalin and 50 of whom also received therapy and behavioral advice.

In general, hyperactive children exhibit higher than normal rates of misbehavior and delinquency, but the boys who received therapy as

well as Ritalin had lower levels of delinquency.

"While it is true that Ritalin by itself has not been found to prevent delinquency," Satterfield said, "it most certainly has never been found to cause delinquency."

By Al Seckel



The Southern California Skeptics (SCS) is a non-profit, tax-exempt educational and scientific corporation, which puts

claims of fringe science, the paranormal, and the occult to the tests of real science and common sense.

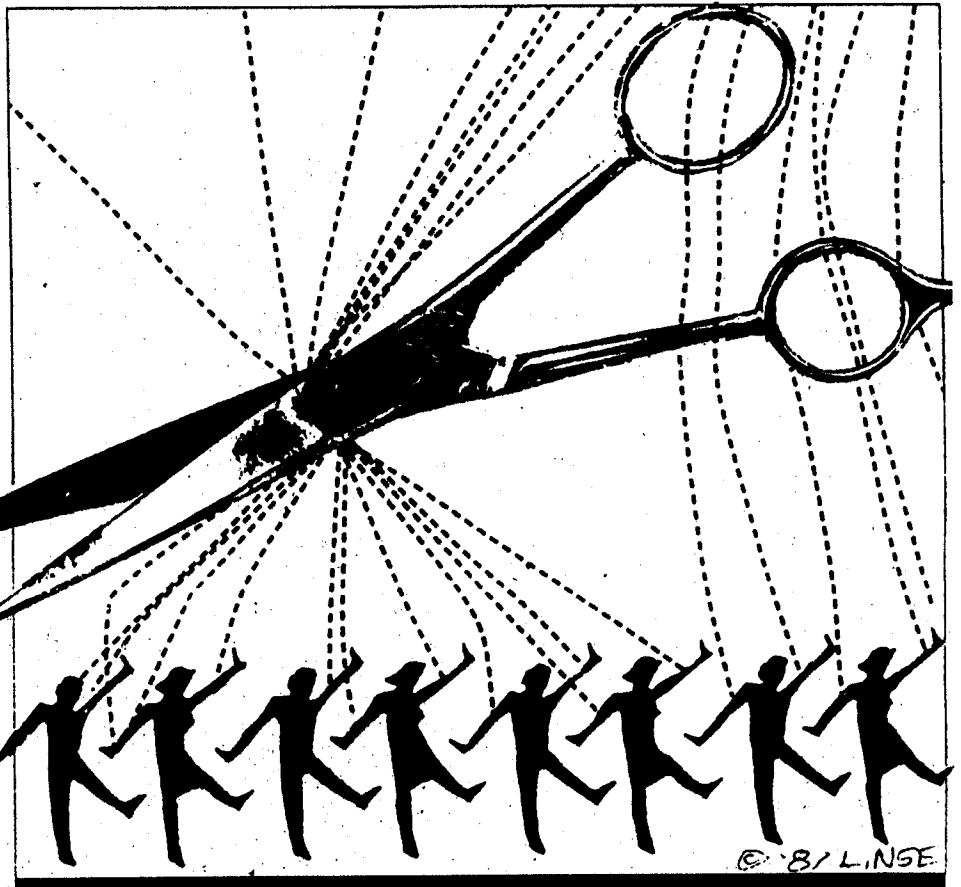
When you meet the friendliest people you have ever known, who introduce you to the most loving group of people you've ever encountered, and you find the leader to be the most inspired, caring, compassionate and understanding person you've ever met, and then you learn the cause of the group is something you never dared hope could be accomplished and all of this sounds too good to be true it probably is too good to be true! Don't give up your education, your hopes and ambitions, to follow a rainbow. "-Jeanne Mills, former member of the People's Temple and subsequent victim of assassination a year following the November 18, 1978 Jonestown suicides/murders of 911 adults and children

In the United States alone



according to the latest estimates, there exists over 2,500 destructive and manipulative groups, which fall into four separate and sometimes overlapping categories: 1. Religious, i.e., Children of God, Unification Church, etc.

# RECOGNIZING DESTRUCTIVE AND MANIPULATIVE GROUPS



2. Self-Awareness/Personal Development (Pseudo-Therapy), i.e., Scientology (Dianetics), EST, Lifespring, etc.

3. Political groups, i.e., Lyndon LaRouche, The Order, etc.

4. Commercial Pyramid Enterprises and "Training" Seminars, i. e, Amway, Her-bal Life, Union Circulation Company

On the surface, many destructive groups seem to offer:

- A. A strong feeling of community.
- B. A sense of purpose
- C. Spiritual fulfillment
- D. Esoteric knowledge.
- E. Wealth

A group can be deviant or even heretical *WITHOUT* being destructive. And a group can also be destructive without holding particularly unusual beliefs. Destructive groups are not interested in helping you, but in helping themselves. Their hidden agenda reveals that they only want your free, fulltime, and

lifetime commitment as a recruiter and fund raiser.

It is important, therefore, to learn how to tell if a group employs manipulation and deception, is exclusive, psychologically or financially exploitative, totalitarian, and disruptive to families, friends and society.

A good way to begin is by realizing that the two basic principles of psychological coercion are:

1. If you can make a person *BEHAVE* the way you want, you can make that person *BELIEVE* the way you want.
2. Sudden, drastic changes in environment lead to heightened suggestibility and to drastic changes in attitudes and beliefs.

Any of the following are characteristics of destructive groups, sometimes not apparent in the first stages of indoctrination

**Immediacy:** You are pressured into making important decisions

right away.

**Charismatic Leadership** - A leader who claims divinity or special knowledge and demands your absolute obedience.

**Deception** - Recruiting and fundraising with hidden objectives, use of "front groups" with innocent sounding names. Followers are secretive or vague about their activities and beliefs.

**Alienation** - Groups that try to separate members from their family, friends and society, with a sudden change in values and substitution of the group as the "new family."

**Fatigue** - Result of extended classes or training sessions, long working hours, and repetition of hypnotic practices (meditating, pseudo-speaking in tongues and chanting).

**Lack of Privacy** - Interference with private contemplation and independent thought - inhibiting the ability to question.

**Exploitation** - Financially, physically and mentally (including relinquishing goods and assets to the group, lack of fringe benefits, sexual abuse, child abuse, punishment and the use of fear and guilt).

**Totalitarian** - The members of the group are always expected to think, feel, and act in a manner prescribed by the group.

**Mystical Manipulation** - Use by the leader of staged "miraculous" or "psychic" powers to impress disciples of his special divinity.

**Need for Purity**: Convincing the subject of his former impurity (before joining the group) and the necessity of becoming pure or perfect as defined by the group.

**Confession**: Getting the subject to openly discuss their innermost fears, anxieties, and deepest secrets.

**Loading the Language**: Creating new words with special meanings understood only by members of the group, or by giving new and special meanings to familiar words and phrases.

**Elitism**: Teaching that all those who disagree with the philosophy of the group are doomed, liars, or agents of Satan.

**Exclusiveness** - The group claims or implies that they have the only

*continued on page 10*

## DESTRUCTIVE GROUPS

*continued from page 5*

right answer to a specific question or problem.

**Rules**: The group requires strict adherence to trivial rules. If you are asked to join a group that has any of the above characteristics here are some suggestions:

**Ask Questions** Never accept vague generalities and inadequate explanations in response to your questions. Learn to recognize when a message or answer is actually confused or ambiguous, perhaps intentionally so. Beware of those who try to silence you through group intimidation.

**You Can Say "No"**: You can always answer "none of the above" to any multiple choice before deciding. Recognize group pressure to decide quickly. Sleep and carefully think out your decision before deciding. No one knows what's right for you except you! After all, the group will not disappear in the next few days or months. Be willing to disobey simple situational rules when you feel you should. Never do anything you don't believe just to appear normal or get someone off your back.

**Keep Your Self-Worth**: Try to focus on what you are doing, rather than on thoughts about yourself. Avoid giving personal confessions that may be later used against you. Many destructive groups and mind-control systems use in-group confessions, selfexposure "games", and the like to catalogue the weaknesses of their members for later exploitation.

**Look for the Hidden Agenda**: What is really being said? What is not being said. Beware of invitations to isolated weekend workshops having nebulous goals.

**Keep Outside Contacts**: Maintain outside interests and sources of social support. Reject the appeal that devotion to the cause requires severing these ties.

**Physical Abuse**: Exit those situations in which you are exposed to or threatened with physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

People who have left destructive groups must deal with feelings of victimization, isolation, repression, and self-worthlessness. When beliefs are shaken, it is difficult to start over. After all, every exit is an entrance to somewhere else.