

Timothy M. Houchin | Testing for ADHD

Timothy M. Houchin, Special to The Courier-Journal; 3:05 a.m. EDT May 9, 2014



Kentucky leads the nation in ADHD diagnoses, according to Louisville Courier-Journal reporter Laura Ungar's May 4 article, "Kentucky tops U.S. for ADHD." As a native Kentuckian I am deeply saddened that our state leads the country in this diagnosis, as it suggests that Kentucky physicians are overmedicating our children. Having said this, I wish to point out that at least two Kentucky physicians are providing access to a state-of-the-art, FDA-cleared medical test for ADHD in an effort to reduce the number of children falsely labeled with the diagnosis.

Unlike traditional, subjective questionnaires that parents and teachers fill out, the Quotient ADHD test is a truly objective test. The Quotient accomplishes this by flashing a series of shapes across a computer screen. The test taker must focus very consistently in order to respond correctly. Reaction time, error rate and other important data are recorded while twin video cameras capture and record the test taker's head motion in 3-D. The test manufacturer reports an over 90 percent predictive value in many different medical statistics — a feat no other test in its category has ever accomplished. To put this in perspective, other ADHD "tests" have statistical predictive values hovering just over 50 percent (effectively a coin flip).

So why is the Quotient ADHD system not widely adopted throughout Kentucky? There are likely at least three reasons:

- There must be an initial financial outlay by the physician's practice, as the testing machine consists of a MacBook Pro computer, dual video cameras, proprietary software and a dedicated environment in the office for testing.
- The physician must be thoroughly trained in both administering and interpreting the test.
- Some parents actually do not want to hear that their child does not in fact have ADHD and that their child's school or behavioral problems are related to something else.

As president of 360 Mental Health Services, I chose to adopt the Quotient ADHD test even before Pearson, a leader in psycho-educational testing, bought out the original developer. ADHD is many things, but easy-to-diagnose is not one of them, contrary to popular belief. The Quotient ADHD test allows parents and caregivers to leave my office with the peace of mind that we have done everything in our power to make an accurate diagnosis, even if that means the diagnosis is not ADHD.

Timothy M. Houchin, M.D., is founder and president of 360 Mental Health Services, a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health clinic and diagnostic center in Lexington, Ky. It's online at www.360mentalhealth.com.