

FOCUS

Hyperactively
researching

HYPERACTIVITY

*Dal professor delves into the
world of attention deficit*

BY ANDREW OLAND

Dr. Daniel Waschbusch is a researcher and assistant professor in Dalhousie's psychology department. He does research on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and is in the planning stages of a research project on the disorder.

Dr. Waschbusch explains that the core problems of ADHD are "high levels of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. They

get distracted easily, have poor self-control, [and are] overactive — for example, running around, tapping and fidgeting."

These core problems then lead to difficulties in school, and acting inappropriately in social situations.

Children with ADHD have "co-occurring conduct problems", such as aggression, stubbornness and defiance. They also have what Dr. Waschbusch calls a "positive illusory bias".

"They tend to interpret themselves and their actions in a much better light than non-ADHD kids would and than objective data [such as marks] would suggest," he said.

According to Dr. Waschbusch, the best estimate of the prevalence of ADHD in the population is 3 percent. As to its cause, he says genes may play a role.

"The best evidence suggests neurology. There is a strong genetic component. Some twin studies have indicated as much as 70 percent [inheritability]."

The average point of diagnosis is when children start attending school, because of the attentional and social demands this environment places on them.

Dr. Waschbusch believes the ideal treatment is to "start off with behaviour therapy, and work to make behaviour therapy as effective as possible. Then you test whether a stimulant adds effectiveness on top of behaviour treatment."

The most common treatment includes stimulant medication, such as Ritalin, which stimulates the parts of the patient's brain that have to do with controlling ADHD behaviour.

Scientists know of no long-term side effects of Ritalin, yet short-term effects are similar to the effects of stimulants like coffee, such as problems getting to sleep.

Children with this disorder do better in structured environments. If they know there are rewards as well as mild repercussions for their actions, they will do better than without those things.

With respect to the difficulty of treatment, Dr. Waschbusch says that a variety of factors have to be considered with each case.

"It depends on the individual, the treatment used and the environment," he says. "We know that children with ADHD, even with treatment, still have some problems. It is better to think of it as a chronic disorder — treatment should be ongoing, throughout the child's life."

Dr. Waschbusch is continuing his research with ADHD children and has set up research and treatment collaborations with the IWK and other professors in the psychology department.

Also, as Dr. Waschbusch explains, "there's a good chance that a local school district and I will run a summer program for children with disruptive behaviour disorders starting in the next few months."



BY MICHAEL ROSSITER

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — To cook any dish in the world, you only need to know four recipes.

"You can bake it, boil it, fry it, or burn it up," said, James Barber, otherwise known to his fans as the Urban Peasant.

Author of 12 cookbooks and host of a popular CBC television show, Barber has made a career out of teaching people how to make cheap, healthy meals with whatever ingredients are at hand.

And with food for the stomach comes food for thought, as Barber also offers quick and easy wisdom to go with his recipes.

"Cooking is like sex," the amateur chef says. "You do the best with what you have."

As Barber prepares to release his latest cookbook, *Cooking for Two*, he notes that he has formed a solid fan-base among people who

live and eat on the cheap.

That makes the Urban Peasant a natural fit for university and college students, who account for many of the hundreds of viewers of his show each afternoon.

At the University of Toronto, students have even named a society after him.

"It is very simple, it is very direct and it is quicker than a pizza,"

Barber said of his easy-to-follow recipes. "It is cheaper and [students] say it does improve their social life."

Barber feels that cooking gives students living away from home a great sense of independence.

"We get a lot of mail from mothers who say they are glad we taught their 19-year-old to cook because now they can leave home," he said.

"The feeling of independence from looking after yourself is wonderful."

Barber recalls that he developed his own frugal style of cooking after he and his wife divorced.

"The way I cook right now is the same way I cooked when I got divorced," he said. "I was consumed with guilt and I lived in a very small 10 by 10 room for about 18 months with one burner and a hot plate. I learned to cook on that one burner and hot plate."

Add to that his previous experience as a cook on sailing ships, and the Urban Peasant was born.

"You have to cook with the minimum amount of stuff [at sea]," Barber said.

"With things rocking and leaning over at an angle of 30 degrees you have to get on with it without using a lot of dishes or a lot of water."

That's why, when he began his show, Barber decided he would only use fresh ingredients and start

cooking when the cameras start rolling.

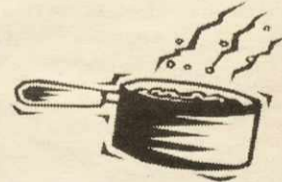
He even made a bet with his audiences to hold him to his promise. If someone brought in something to cook, Barber said they could order a pizza while he went to work.

If the cooking wasn't done "before the pizza arrived, we would give them five thousand bucks," Barber said.

In the six years the show has been on the air, Barber has not once had to pay out.

Barber encourages his audiences to remain like himself, as an "enthusiastic amateur," not a "professional cook."

"You can go into a corner store in Newfoundland and buy pretty much the same stuff that you could buy in Vancouver," said Barber. "This is where our show is coming from. We are using stuff anyone can get a hold of in a corner store."

In the kitchen with the Urban Peasant

Some 600 episodes later, Barber gets fan mail from all kinds of people from all over the country.

"The best letter we ever had was from an 87-year-old. He wrote and said that he stopped cooking 15 years ago when his wife died. Since he had been watching the show, he started cooking again. He even said he now has a new girlfriend."

"We teach people to have confidence," Barber added with a laugh. "We liberate them a bit and teach them that they can cook."

