



USA: PILL FOR GOOD LITTLE CHILDREN

Director(s): Roxane FRIAS

Writer(s): Roxanne FRIAS

Hyperactivity - with or without attention deficiency disorder - is a diagnosis that has steadily increased in the last years. Hyperactive children are less attentive and less successful in school. In a society that is built on success, the parents are concerned about the performance of their young. But there exists a pill that puts everything right: Ritalin. Dr Lawrence Diller, a behavioural paediatrician, faces the problem daily "If your kid is not on the successful path, you begin to worry. There is a lot of pressure." It is essentially prescribed to white children - particularly boys - from middle to higher social classes, sometimes as early as age 4 or less. But on 21 March 2000, Chief Medical Examiner, Dr Dragovic, faced a troubling case: 14-year-old Mathew Smith died suddenly while skate boarding. The post mortem revealed a heart that looked in sections like that of someone abusing cocaine in his early thirties... Mathew has been taking Ritalin since age 5. 5 to 6 million children in North America regularly take Ritalin and the U.S.A. represents 80% of world market. Profit is an essential element that leads to the diagnosis recommending the use of Ritalin - "the technological fix" as Dr Diller calls it. Last year alone, 500 million US\$ have been spent on advertising Ritalin.

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