

In Response:

[Oliver North, incoming NRA chief, blames school shootings on 'culture of violence'](#)

By Frances Stead Sellers and Michael Scherer  
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In his comments responding to the causes of gun violence in schools, Oliver North blames the problem on “youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence” in which many young boys have “been on Ritalin” since early childhood. “They’ve been drugged in many cases,” he said.

As psychiatrists who treat children, adolescents, and adults, we know such comments are factually wrong. Blaming school shootings on stimulants (such as methylphenidate) and the treatment of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in boys (by the way, it also is treated in girls) is simply not true. Medications for ADHD are well established and effective, and those with ADHD can benefit from taking medication either alone or in combination with behavioral therapy. These treatments can improve functioning at home, school, and in social situations.

There is no evidence that treatment of ADHD with stimulants results in criminality. Contrarily, studies from around the world show that treatment of ADHD with stimulants substantially reduces criminality – in some cases by 40%. Research shows that most people with mental illnesses are not violent. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population.

We all share a common interest in eliminating school gun violence. However, misinformation about the treatment of mental illness does not solve the problem but contributes to stigma while deflecting the true complex causes of violence.

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