

**Into the Mouths of Babes: Hyperactivity, Food Additives
and the History of the Feingold Diet**
[volume 1 of 2 volumes]

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Abstract

In 1974 Random House published a popular and controversial book entitled *Why Your Child is Hyperactive*. The author, San Francisco allergist Ben F. Feingold, claimed that hyperactivity was caused by food additives and was best prevented and treated with a diet, subsequently dubbed the 'Feingold diet', free of such substances. Reaction to the idea was swift. The media and parents found Feingold's environmentally-based theory intriguing, as it provided an aetiological explanation for hyperactivity that was both sensible and topical. The medical community, in contrast, was suspicious and designed double-blind trials to test his theory. The dominant perception emerging out of these tests was that Feingold's hypothesis was incorrect and, soon after Feingold's death in 1982, medical and media attention faded away.

Drawing on unpublished archival material, medical literature, popular media sources and oral history interviews, this thesis explores the rise and fall of the Feingold diet. It examines the origins of Feingold's idea, the manner in which his theory was disseminated to the medical community and the broader public, and analyses how physicians and patients evaluated whether or not Feingold's hypothesis was correct. Aiming to contribute to the histories of allergy, psychiatry and nutrition, the thesis contends that social factors, rather than scientific testing, were largely responsible for the fate of the Feingold diet. Some of these factors include Feingold's methods and approach to describing and promoting his diet, the professional and economic interests of medical practitioners and the food, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, and the difficulties inherent in following the diet. From a broader historiographical perspective, the history of the Feingold diet suggests that in order to understand how medical controversies are resolved it is essential to analyse the historical context within which they emerge.

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Abbreviations

AAA	American Academy of Allergy
AAAAI	American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
AAP	American Academy of Pediatrics
AASA	American Association for the Study of Allergy
ACA	American College of Allergists
ACSH	American Council on Science and Health
ADD	Attention-Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
ADI	Allowable Daily Intake
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Psychiatry</i>
AMA	American Medical Association
APA	American Psychiatric Association
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHA	Butylated Hydroxyanisole
BHT	Butylated Hydroxytoluene
<i>BMJ</i>	<i>British Medical Journal</i>
BSE	British Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CHADD	Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
CJD	Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease
CMA	California Medical Association
CNN	Cable News Network
CSPI	Center for Science in the Public Interest
DES	Diethylstilbestrol
<i>DSM</i>	<i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Disorders</i>

EEG	Electroencephalogram
FAUS	Feingold Association of the United States
FDA	Food and Drug Administration (United States)
FSA	Foods Standards Agency (United Kingdom)
IgE	Immunoglobulin E
<i>IJSP</i>	<i>International Journal of Social Psychiatry</i>
IUD	Intrauterine Device
<i>JAACP</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry</i>
<i>JAMA</i>	<i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i>
K-P	Kaiser-Permanente
LSD	Lysergic Acid Diethylamide
MBD	Minimal Brain Damage
MBD	Minimal Brain Dysfunction
MCS	Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
MMR	Measles, Mumps and Rubella Vaccine
MSG	Monosodium Glutamate
NACHFA	National Advisory Committee on Hyperkinesis and Food Additives
NDEA	National Defense Education Act
NIH	National Institutes of Health
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SSAAC	Society for the Study of Asthma and Allied Conditions
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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