Today’s piece was prepared by Tiana Won, MD, based on a Scientific American article, [Does artificial food coloring contribute to ADHD in children?](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/does-artificial-food-coloring-contribute-to-adhd-in-children/)

This article, written in response to Kraft’s decision to remove artificial food coloring from its macaroni and cheese, reviews evidence linking artificial food coloring to ADHD. In 2007, a study in the UK suggesting that artificial colors were associated with hyperactivity in children led to a requirement in the European Union (EU) that food labels indicate when a product contains one of the investigated dyes. When the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviewed the research in 2011, however, it determined that evidence supporting this link was insufficient. The article includes quotes from the author of a meta-analysis suggesting that color additives affect behavior in children, and an environmental scientist who called for banning the artificial colors until their safety is proven.

Although this article identifies limitations of the research corroborating the link between artificial colors and child hyperactivity (such as small sample sizes and the confounding benefit of limited processed food in diets with lower artificial color content), it suggests that the scientific community is more united in its distrust of food colors than may be the case and would be more balanced if a member of the FDA had been interviewed regarding their decision not to require an additional label. While the stakes may be low for artificial food colors- which are generally found in foods that we as physicians would discourage our patients from eating anyways- the portrayal of the FDA as incompetent in protecting consumers could undermine trust in the agency with implications for other areas of public health, such as trust in vaccine safety. With more companies removing artificial colors from their foods and marketing them as “natural,” we can guide parents to choose less processed foods rather making decisions based on ideas of food color.

**RESOURCES ON FOOD ADDITIVES & BEHAVIOR:**

[National Resource Center on ADHD](http://www.help4adhd.org/en/about)*provides basic information on the science behind ADHD, its treatment, and resources for addressing challenges associated with the diagnosis*

[CHADD](http://www.chadd.org/)*provides some basic information about ADHD as well as links to support groups*

[Lucky Charms, the new superfood](http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/06/general-mills-to-phase-out-artificial-cereal-dyes/396536/) *Hamblin J. The Atlantic. June 23, 2015*

[ADHD and food additives revisited](http://www.feingold.org/Research/PDFstudies/AAP08.pdf) *Schonwald A.AAP Grand Rounds. 2008;19:17. DOI:10.1542/gr.19-2-17*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!