# ADHD & TEENS

Last issue, we looked at the effect of ADHD on relationships; this month, DR QURATULAIN ZAIDI discusses strategies for families with teenagers who have the disorder.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects millions of people regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. It's a chronic condition marked by persistent inattention, hyperactivity and sometimes impulsivity.

ADHD begins in childhood and often lasts into adulthood – and it has many faces. While it was once thought that boys were more commonly affected and that they would "grow out of it", this is not true. We now know that both boys and girls, as well as men and women, can all live with the effects of ADHD. Furthermore, it can cause significant impairment in school, at work and throughout the lives of those affected by it.

With this in mind, it will come as no surprise to find that recent studies show that 11 percent of school-age children meet the necessary criteria for an ADHD diagnosis.

Often mistakenly described as a behaviour problem, attention deficit is in fact a disorder of the brain's executive function, the ability to plan and prioritise – and a disorder that's widely misunderstood and misdiagnosed. In terms of lifespan development, adolescence is a challenging time, especially in this era of social media. Indeed, it could be said that teens must go through this tough period of life twice; once in their real-life adolescence, and again in the online world.

Entry into middle school is especially challenging for children with ADHD because they're expected to be able to switch from class to class when their biggest challenge is the organisational ability to plan and prioritise. Secondary school final years become harder still, as it's a developmental stage when there are increased social and academic expectations. Teens have more autonomy and less structure at this time, because they're supposed to be able to manage and organise themselves to be