

Consider another opinion about growth hormone



BARBARA SCHIFF

STREET SENSE
Dear Barbara—
My son is a very short third grader whose stature is causing behavioral problems in school. He fights with the other kids and with his teacher. His pediatrician has recommended that I have him evaluated for a growth hormone that the doctor says might help him become taller than he could without it.
I am confused about my own values in this matter. There is an engineering quality about doing something like this that does not appeal to me. Do you know anyone who has ever taken growth hormone and if you do, did it affect his behavior?
I feel so sorry for my son because I believe that he will be handicapped if he continues to be so much shorter than his peers. I am 5 feet 8 inches and my wife is 5 feet 3 inches, we are average size people. The doctor says that my son lacks a growth hormone needed for adequate growth.

Jack

Dear Jack,
I have never known anyone who has taken growth hormone. Of course, it would welcome any first hand information from readers; that would be best. The sources for this column are the December 1992 issue of the American Psychological Association, "Monitor," Fran Price of the Human Growth Foundation, and a pediatric nurse who is familiar with children and families involved in growth hormone treatment.
It is essential that the diagnosis be made only after a careful and comprehensive testing. When it is a valid diagnosis, growth hormone has been used successfully. The argument is over whether it can help other children, those who are short but do not lack the hormone. With those with the deficiency the drug has been successful both in adding inches and in lessening behavior problems. Many experts believe that extreme shortness in childhood can cause problems with

peers and with authority figures. Often children are treated as if they are as mature as their height suggests and not by their actual age or behavior. There is argument among other professionals about whether extremely short stature is in fact the handicap you think it is.

While most recognize the physical limitations and social stigma the short people must endure, it is just as true that short people often lead normal lives. Robert Reich our newly appointed Secretary of Labor is 4 feet-9 inches tall. He is respected as at prolific writer and speaker. He talks often about his short stature and how it forced him to be more than adequate in order to make up for this deficiency.

The parents of children receiving growth hormone treatment respond in a relief because a solution to a problem has been found. For others, especially parents who have denied the problem, it creates stress because denial becomes more difficult. He talks often about his short stature and how it forced him to be more than adequate in order to make up for this deficiency.

If you question your doctor's diagnosis you should go for a second opinion. A pediatric endocrinologist is most familiar with this kind of problem. Also, you could contact the Human Growth Foundation at (800) 451-6434. They do not advocate patient guidelines for whom should be treated with human growth hormone but they are a fine source of information on how and why we don't grow. They also guide parents to understand what makes up an adequate diagnosis.

No one can make this decision for you, but if you feel sorry for your son, it is likely that he will too. If it is possible, change feeling sorry for oneself to feeling lucky about oneself particularly when good solutions are available.

Barbara
If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. You can also leave a message by calling 953-2047, mailbox 1877, on a Touch-Tone phone.

Turturro's 'Mac' is a labor of love

BY JOHN MONAGHAN
SPECIAL WRITER

MOVIES

The mason swiftly and meticulously places each brick, shaves off the excess mortar, then levels it off before moving on to the next. process in awe, announces to his brothers waiting in the car, "that's our new bricklayer." "Mac," opening this week at the Maple, expects its audience to share Mac's fascination with masonry craftsmanship. Fortunately, you don't have to be Bob Villa to appreciate the labor of love created by actor/writer/director John Turturro.

Tired of working for slapdash contractors, three Queens-based

brothers decide to start their own business and cash in on the building boom of the 1950s. The ambitious Mac (Turturro) soon discovers that brothers Vico and Bruno (Michael Badalucco and Carl Capotorto) don't share his "Old World" work ethic.

Not that it's entirely their fault. Mac is a workaholic and perfectionist. He takes on their late father's adage: "There are only two ways to do something. My way and the right way. And they're both the same."

They live in claustrophobically close quarters with their widowed

mother, who is never actually seen, but only heard Peanut-style screaming from her room upstairs. In the bathroom, Vico will be shaving, Bruno will be soaking in the tub, while Mac is on the toilet.

Until now, Turturro was best known for his work with Spike Lee ("Do the Right Thing") and the Coen Brothers ("Barton Fink"). He has been developing "Mac" since 1980 with co-writer Brandon Cole, staging bits of it as a work-in-progress and fine tuning for the movie project.

The realism of "Mac's" script comes from Turturro's childhood of weekends working with his carpenter father. The movie is dedicated to the late Nicholas Turturro, whose presence radiates from every frame. Over the closing credits, the loving son places the sound of his father's irritated voice on an answering machine.

As a first-time director, Turturro does leave some loose ends. Ellen Barkin's amusing bit as a

bestnik poet and artist's model who steams up both of Mac's brothers, seems like an afterthought. John Amos has an emotional hospital room scene after he falls off a roof, but he's never heard from again.

Turturro instead focuses his efforts on the love-hate relationship between the brothers, all three vividly portrayed. Mac's wife is Turturro's real-life spouse Katherine Borowitz and not surprisingly she brings a naturalistic quality to the role.

More than just an entertaining period piece, the movie and its message about taking pride in your work, whether it's laying cement or making movies, really hits home.

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a touch tone phone, or write him care of Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

SCREEN SCENE

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across Metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

Ingmar Bergman, married musicians (Max von Sydow and Liv Ullmann) suffer as civil war rages across their island.

ANN ARBOR FILM CO-OP
Auditorium & Angell Hall, 435 S. State, Ann Arbor. Call 663-7812 for information. (\$4)

"Bullet in the Head" (Hong Kong — 1990). 7 and 9 p.m. March 28-27. Three Hong Kong buddies seek their fortunes in war-torn Vietnam in this undiscovered epic gem from action director John Woo ("The Killer"). A Detroit-area premiere.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students and senior citizens)

"Olivier Olivier" (France — 1992). 7 and 9:30 p.m. March 28-27. A psychological thriller, based on a true story about a nine-year-old boy's disappearance from a small French town. When he returns at age 14, no one's really sure if he's the same child. Directed by Agnieszka Holland ("Europa, Europa"), this acclaimed new film plays for two weekends.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY
18671 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Tel. 943-2350 for information. (Free)

"Out of the Blue" (USA — 1947). 7 p.m. March 22. George Brent and Virginia Mayo star in this comedy about life in a high-class apartment building populated by an assortment of non-conformists.

MICHIGAN THEATRE
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (\$5; \$4 students and senior citizens)
"Shame" (Sweden — 1968). 4:15 p.m. March 22, 7 p.m. March 23. In this classic from director

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