



ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ADHD

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OBJECTIVES

- Learn about how ADHD presents differently in adults than children and how this effects assessment and treatment.
- Particular strategies for and challenges of working with college students will be discussed.

ADHD – NOT JUST FOR KIDS

- Previously thought kids “grew out of” ADHD
- Not clinically recognized/researched in adults until 1990s

ADULT ADHD PREVALENCE & CORRELATES

- 50-65% ADHD children are still fully symptomatic as adults
- Estimated current U.S. prevalence 2.5 - 4.4%
- Male, non-Hispanic White, previously married, unemployed

American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Kessler et al., 2006

DSM-5 INATTENTION CRITERIA

- Often fails to give close attention to detail/careless mistakes
- Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play
- Often doesn't seem to listen when directly spoken to
- Often doesn't follow through on instructions & fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or work
- Often has difficulty organizing tasks & activities
- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- Often loses necessary objects
- Often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
- Often forgetful in daily activities

American Psychiatric Association, 2013

DSM-5 HYPERACTIVE/IMPULSIVE CRITERIA

- Often fidgets with/taps hands/feet/squirms
- Often leaves seat in situations where staying seated is expected
- Often runs/climbs in inappropriate situations
- Often unable to play/engage in leisure quietly
- Often on the go/acts as if driven by motor
- Often talks excessively
- Often blurts out answer before question completed
- Often has difficulty waiting turn
- Often interrupts/intrudes on others

American Psychiatric Association, 2013

ADHD CRITERIA ADJUSTED FOR ADULTS

- Only 5 criteria required vs. 6
- Several symptoms present prior to age 12

PROBLEMS WITH DSM-5 CRITERIA

- Fewer developmentally appropriate items for adolescents & adults
- Fixed diagnostic cutoff results in variable sensitivity at different ages
- Leads to decreased stability of diagnosis over time
- Don't account for gender differences in manifestation & severity
- Don't include more recent conceptualizations as having deficient response inhibition, self-regulation, or executive function

PRESENTING COMPLAINTS

- Difficulty finding/keeping jobs
- Performing below competence on job
- Inability to perform to intellectual level in school
- Concentration difficulties
- Unable to establish & maintain routine
- Forgetfulness
- Confusion, trouble thinking clearly
- Poor self-discipline
- Procrastination
- Lack of motivation
- Depression, low self-esteem

Barkley, 1990; Gibbons & Weiss, 2007

DOMAINS OF IMPAIRMENT

- Adults with ADHD experience more impairment across domains than those without and those with other psychiatric disorders
 - Education
 - Home responsibilities
 - Occupation
 - Dating/marriage
 - Social activities
 - Community activities

Barkley, Murphy, & Fischer, 2008

INATTENTION EXAMPLES/CONCERNS

- Diminished working memory
- Planning for future
- Conceptualizing consequences
- Prioritizing
- Tuning out irrelevant distractions
- Makes it difficult to care for others, organize a household

Gibbons et al., 2007

CONDITIONS WHEN INATTENTION IS OBSERVED

- Repetitive
- Boring/uninteresting
- Effortful
- Not chosen

ADULT HYPERACTIVE TENDENCIES

- Restless & fidgety
- Impatient
- Changing interests
- Takes on too much
- Rushed
- Restless & driven
- Unable to slow down & relax
- Sometimes channel this into overwork or intense sports
- Ski or boat racing

Gibbons et al., 2007

EXAMPLES OF IMPULSIVITY

- Driving accidents/speeding tickets
- Multiple marriages
- Sexual dysfunction
- Risk for police & court involvement – assault, shoplifting, selling drugs
- Frequent moves
- Interpersonal irritability
- Substance abuse tendencies
- Quitting school

Barkley et al., 2008; Gibbons et al., 2007

SCHOOL & WORK CONCERNS

- Poor self-regulation
- Can't sustain attention to paperwork
- Difficulty remaining alert & focused
- Poor organization & planning
- Procrastination
- Poor time management
- Poor reading comprehension
- Risk for underachievement
- Impulsive decision making
- Can't work well independently
- Difficulty following directions
- Impulsively changes jobs
- Often late
- Forgetful
- Poor self-discipline
- Subjective sense of restlessness

INTERPERSONAL CONCERNS

- Impulsive comments
- Quick to become emotional
- Stress intolerance
- Poor adherence to obligations
- Viewed as immature
- Talk excessively/poor listener
- Difficulty sustaining relationships/friends

ASSESSMENT OF ADHD IN ADULTS

- Comprehensive evaluation important because of comorbidity
- >87% of adults with ADHD have comorbidities
- >50% have > 2 comorbidities

Gibbons et al., 2007

COMORBIDITY

- **ADHD without any other disorder is the exception**
- Bipolar disorder
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Dyslexia
- Substance use –alcohol, tobacco, illicit & prescription drugs
- Personality disorders- antisocial, narcissistic, borderline

American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Boada, Kirk, & Fischer, 2014

SUICIDALITY

- Increased suicidal thoughts & attempts, particularly in hyperactive groups
- Mediated by presence of depression, conduct disorder, & less so severity of ADHD in childhood
- Females more likely to consider suicide, but not attempt

HEALTH BEHAVIORS

- Diminished concern for future consequences leads to less concern for:
 - Exercise
 - Proper diet
 - Moderation in substances – caffeine, tobacco, alcohol
 - Sleep
 - Medical/dental care
 - Safe sex

Barkley et al., 2008

MEDICAL CONDITIONS MIMICKING ADHD

- Sleep apnea & other sleep disorders
- Medication side effects
- Asthma, allergies
- Neurotoxin exposure
- Thyroid dysfunction
- Hypoglycemia
- Ear infections or hearing loss
- Head injury
- Renal insufficiency
- Anoxic encephalopathy
- Vitamin deficiency
- Hepatic (liver) insufficiency
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Seizures

Barkley, 1990

AIDS TO FORMULATE DIAGNOSIS

- Medical/school records
- Multiple informants
- Discrepancy between IQ, achievement, & grades
- Clinical presentation

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

- **Test results reveal strengths & weakness which are helpful in formulating treatment**
- SELF & OTHER REPORT SYMPTOM REPORT MEASURES
- TESTS OF ATTENTION & INHIBITION
- MEMORY TESTS
- EXECUTIVE FUNCTION MEASURES
- IQ TESTS
- ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT MEASURES
- PERSONALITY TESTS

TREATMENT OF ADHD IN ADULTS

- Psychoeducation
- Medication
- Vocational support
- Coaching- offer reminders, suggestions, structure, boundaries
- Marital, family & parenting support

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

- Individual or group
- Time management
 - time awareness & scheduling
 - making tasks manageable
 - prioritizing, lists
 - activation & motivation
- Organization
 - Implementing & maintaining
- Planning
- Going to bed, waking, & getting to work on time

Solanto, 2011

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Make tasks interesting
- Make payoffs valuable
- Adjust expectations
- Allow more trials to master
- Allow more time for change
- No radio/phone while driving
- Make lists
- Use planner
- Set timers
- Set priorities
- One thing at a time

CHALLENGES IN ASSESSING COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Potential concern for medication seeking for misuse/abuse or accommodations for high-stakes exams
 - Importance of collateral information
 - Measures can include ways to assess inconsistency, unusual, or over-reporting responses

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Mixed findings on comorbid psychological disorders
- Students with 4 or more childhood/current ADHD symptoms had more driving anger, displayed it in more hostile/aggressive ways & more aggressive & risky driving than those with 2 or fewer symptoms
- Students with high ADHD symptoms more angry in general
- Lower self-esteem
- Lower quality of life – parent-child relationships, less success with personal growth, less interest & involvement in politics, less material & physical well-being
- Lower levels of college adjustment & social skills

Richards, 2002; Shaw-Zirt, Popali-Lehane, Chaplin, & Bergman, 2005

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Lower GPA & more academic problems than those without
- Lower academic coping skills – organization, study skills
- Males with inattentive type less assertive
- Males with combined type reported higher sexual drive

Weyandt & DuPaul, 2006

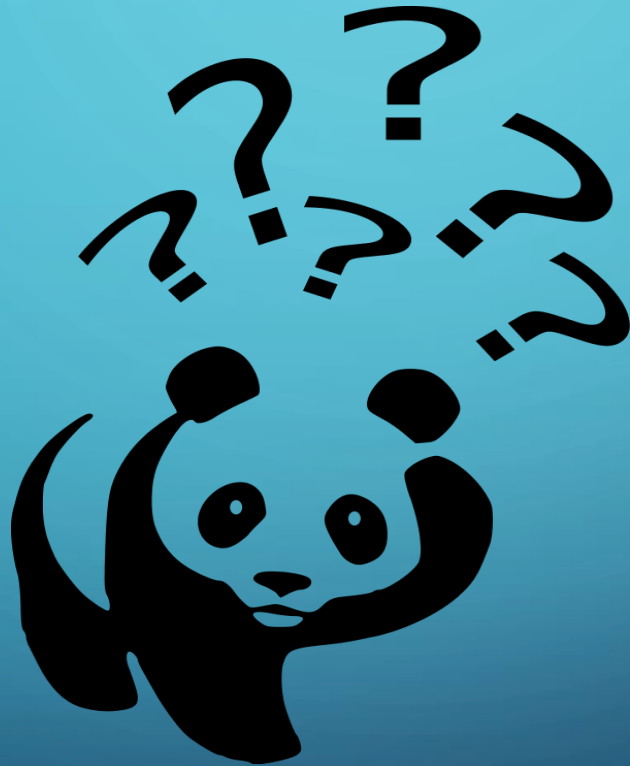
WRITTEN REPORTS

- Comprehensive: include history, detailed findings, & recommendations
- Look at schools' requirements for accommodations & write accordingly

COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS

- Extended time
- Separate room for testing
- Breaks during testing
- Study groups & study strategies
- Tutoring for learning difficulties
- Go to office hours, ask for help, tell your professors your struggles
- Schedule classes when you're at your best
- Take a balanced load of courses based on difficulty/work
- Record lectures
- Take notes in your own words while reading
- Coach/mentor
- Psychotherapy
- Sleep
- exercise

THANK YOU AND QUESTIONS!



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