

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – A Review, Dental Implications and Treatment Recommendations for Dental Professionals

Dr. Amith Adyanthaya¹, Dr. Sajeela Ismail²

¹(Reader, Department of Pediatric and Preventive Dentistry, KMCT Dental College, Kerala, India)

²(Postgraduate resident, Department of Pediatric and Preventive Dentistry, KMCT Dental College, Kerala, India)

Abstract : Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a highly prevalent neurodevelopmental disorder in childhood. It is characterized by definite behavioral patterns of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity, which might lead to performance problems in the social, educational, or work environments. This article reviews the current evidence about the diagnosis and treatment of children and adolescents with ADHD based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. Along with the discussion of etiology, classification, diagnosis and treatment approaches based on a survey of web tools primarily the MEDLINE database, the article also aims at reviewing the dental implications and recommendations for dental practitioners regarding management of children with ADHD

Keywords: attention deficit, hyperactivity, impulsivity, dental

I. Introduction

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is one of the commonest childhood behavioral disorders encountered in outpatient settings. ^[1]Prevalence of ADHD varies depending on age and region but the worldwide prevalence is estimated to be 5.29%. ^[2]Based on several studies prevalence rates are estimated to be in the wide range of 2% and 17%. ^[3]An obvious gender predilection is found in prevalence of ADHD with male to female ratio being 3:1. ^[4]ADHD is assumed to develop in childhood, but less than 40% of these children meet the diagnostic criteria in their teenage years. ^[2]Although onset is usually around age of three, the diagnosis is not made until the child is in elementary school. ^[5]There is a dearth of data on the prevalence of this disorder in preschool children. ^[6, 7, 8]A recent Indian study found presence of comorbid disorders in 40.0% of children with ADHD. ^[9]Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Conduct Disorder (CD), and affective, anxiety and learning disorders are some of the common co-morbid disorders. ^[10]Attempts were made to identify relevant published studies in English language journals. The bibliographic databases included MEDLINE database and Google Scholar. These databases were searched for the period from 1900 to end of October 2014 to identify studies to be considered for this review.

II. Definition

As stated in the fourth edition of American Psychiatric Association's (APA) DSM-IV, ADHD is a behavioral and neurocognitive condition characterized by developmentally inappropriate and impairing levels of gross motor over activity, inattention, and impulsivity. ^[11] There are five main diagnostic criteria:

1. Onset before age 7 years
2. symptoms last more than 6 months
3. An 18-item symptom list of which 6 of 9 inattention or 6 of 9 hyperactivity/ impulsive symptoms have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is maladaptive and inconsistent with developmental level
4. Impairment in two or more settings; and
5. Symptoms that do not occur exclusively during the course of a pervasive developmental disorder or other psychotic disorders and those that cannot be attributed to any other mental illness, such as depression. ^[2]

III. History

The first mention of a disorder resembling ADHD was given by Sir Alexander Crichton in 1798. The Goulstonian Lectures by Sir George Frederic Still in 1902 is considered to be the scientific starting point in the history of ADHD. He presented series of lectures on 43 child patients of his who were restless, impulsive and inattentive, with intense affective responses and conduct problems. ^[12, 13] Similar clinical conditions were termed "postencephalitic behavior disorder" ^[14] "minimal brain damage syndrome", "minimal brain dysfunction" ^[15], "hyperkinetic impulse disorder" ^[16] and subsequently, the concept of a hyperactivity syndrome was generated. ^[17]

American Psychiatric Association renamed the disorder “Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (with or without hyperactivity)” in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-III published in 1980^[18]. DSM-III devised three separate symptom lists for inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity, which were more specific than previous ones^[19]. The concept of two subtypes were eliminated in revision of the third edition of the DSM (DSM-III-R) in 1987 the condition was subsequently renamed “Attention deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)”^[20]. The symptoms of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity were combined into a single list of symptoms with a single cutoff score. The subtype “ADD without hyperactivity” was deleted and added to the category named “undifferentiated ADD”. Based on a large field trial, the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) was outlined in 1994.^[21] ADHD was categorized into three subtypes. ADHD which was a heterogeneous category in DSM-III-R was subdivided into three subtypes.^[22]

The DSM-5 was developed in 2013 and the definition of ADHD was changed in a way to differentiate the condition in children and adults. Subtypes were renamed as “presentations.” Symptoms can change and an individual can change ‘presentations’ at different points in his lifetime.

The notable advantage of DSM-5 over DSM-IV TR is that a person can now be diagnosed with ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder.^[23]

IV. Classification

The three subtypes of ADHD according to DSM-IV based on symptoms displayed are combined, primarily inattentive and primarily hyperactive/impulsive types.^[24] In the combined subtype, symptoms of both inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity are expressed. This is the most common subtype and also the one that has been most described. The primarily inattentive subtype, earlier termed Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), is the second most common subdivision. This subtype generally shows no gender predilection. Some children may be initially diagnosed as primarily inattentive but gradually when symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity become apparent, the diagnosis gets modified as the combined subtype. The primarily hyperactive/impulsive subtype most commonly comprises of very young children who may actually have the combined subtype but maybe of an age where inattention is barely perceivable. DSM-5 maintains these categories, but have renamed them as combined presentation, predominantly inattentive presentation, and predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation.

DSM-5 has an additional fourth subtype, Inattentive (Restrictive) where the criterion for inattention are met but no more than two symptoms from hyperactive/impulsive have been persisting for the last 6 months.^[25]

V. Etiology

Although etiology of ADHD is not clearly determined, many studies suggest that the condition involves functional and anatomical dysfunction in the brain’s frontal cortex and basal ganglia segments of cortico-basal ganglia-thalamo-cortical circuitry.^[26] Research on neurobiological factors indicates that genetics and neurochemistry play critical roles.^[2]

5.1 Genetics

Multiple studies indicate a genetic transmission in about 80% of ADHD cases.^[24] Twin studies proves greater prevalence of ADHD in monozygotic twins.^[27] As per sibling and half sibling studies, siblings of children with ADHD may be at risk of developing not only ADHD and even subclinical symptoms of the disorder^[28] Adoption studies: Though biological parents cannot be assessed, both genetic and environmental influences on the disorder are hypothesized.^[29, 30] Family studies show that ADHD runs in certain families.^[31, 32] First degree relatives of children with ADHD have a 20-25% risk for ADHD, compared with 4-5% for relatives of controls.^[33] If a parent has ADHD, as high as 50% of his or her offspring are likely to develop the disorder.^[34] Segregation Studies points at a single major gene with low penetrance.^[35]

5.2 Mode of inheritance

Sex-linked transmission, polygenetic multiple threshold model and more recently, effect of several interacting genes of modest effect have been postulated to cause ADHD.^[24, 36]

5.3 Molecular Genetic Studies

Various genes including the thyroid receptor B gene, dopamine type D2 receptor gene(DRD2), dopamine transporter gene(DAT1), dopamine 4 receptor seven-allele gene(DRD4), dopamine β-hydroxylase(DBH), dopamine 5 receptor(DRD5), catechol-o-methyltransferase (COMT), androgen receptors have been reported to be closely related with ADHD symptoms.^[37, 38, 39, 40]

5.4 Environmental factors

The studies reviewed in this article show that many environmental risk factors and potential gene-environment interactions also increase the risk for the disorder. Several biological and environmental factors have also been proposed as risk factors for ADHD, including food additives/diet, lead contamination, cigarette and alcohol exposure, maternal smoking during pregnancy, and low birth weight.^[41] Prenatal exposure to tobacco, alcohol, smoking, illicit drugs like marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, and heroin, caffeine, antihypertensives and antidepressants have been implicated in development of ADHD. Studies and literature demonstrate an increased risk of ADHD with lead^[42], manganese^[43], organophosphate pesticides^[44], phthalate^[45], polyfluoroalkyl chemicals.^[46] Lower maternal red blood cell folate and total folate intake in early pregnancy were significantly associated with higher child hyperactivity and peer problem scores at a mean age of 8.75 years.^[47] Maternal pre-pregnancy obesity was found to predict high child inattentive symptoms.

5.5 Parenting and parental mental health

Probability of children with ADHD having a parent with a history of ADHD is very high.^[48] Parenting styles, psychosocial support, socioeconomic status, and parental psychopathology have been pointed out as important factors which influence the development of symptoms.^[49] Children belonging to families where there is marital disharmony, family dysfunction, and where there is overt hostility between child and parent have been found to develop hyperactive features.^[50]

5.6 Other psychosocial factors

Adverse social factors^[51] and comorbid symptoms of depression and anxiety^[52] also exacerbate the symptoms of ADHD.

VI. Diagnosis And Assessment

Diagnosis is complicated, and so assessment should be meticulous and methodical. The diagnostic interviews should be based on the following: An interview with parents to establish the child's developmental history, family history, presenting problems, and other relevant information, including systematic information about the presence or absence of diagnostic criteria.^[53]

Feedbacks from teachers are vulnerable in deducing the presence or absence of diagnostic criteria and special educational needs.

- Various Rating scales and checklists for diagnosing ADHD include the 'strengths and difficulties' questionnaire^[54], Achenbach's child behavior checklist^[55], Conners' parent and teacher's rating scales^[56], Rutter's parent^[57] and teacher scales^[58], and the Barkley and Du Paul ADHD rating scale.^[59]
- Scrupulous observation of the child can be a key in assessment.
- Medical evaluation to exclude physical causes of attention or activity problems.
- Cognitive testing might be employed for evaluation of specific difficulties.
- In confirming the diagnosis, children still should have six or more symptoms of the disorder. In people 17 years and older the DSM-5 states that they should have at least five symptoms.^[23]
- Combined inattentive & hyperactive-impulsive presentation: Has symptoms from both of the other presentations.

VII. Management Of ADHD

ADHD can be managed by three treatment modalities:

- (1) Medication management, (2) behavioral therapy, and (3) a combination of the two approaches.^[60]
- Concomitant interventions include social skills training, family work, and cognitive therapy.^[53]

7.1 Medication

Stimulants of the phenylethylamine variety, such as methylphenidate and dexamphetamine, have proven short-term benefits for children with ADHD.^[61, 62, 63] Although Xanthine stimulants, such as caffeine can be possible enhancers of concentration, it has also been found to increase restlessness and hyperactivity.^[64] Atomoxetine, a non-stimulant, highly selective noradrenaline reuptake inhibitor is a recent advance in the pharmacological management of ADHD.^[65, 66] Additional pharmacological options include the antidepressants: bupropion and desipramine; and the antihypertensives: clonidine and guanfacine.^[65]

7.2 Behavioral therapy

Parents are advised to have positive interactions with their affected child. Reinforcement of positive behaviors by praise, using daily contingency charts (star or 'happy face' charts), active ignoring of negative behaviors, and even effective punishment for intolerable behaviors are recommended.^[67, 68] Reprimands and redirection, response costs, self-instruction/cognitive behavior training, and task or environmental

stimulation/biofeedback are practical approaches in managing children with the disorder. Interventions at school include seating the child near the teacher to minimize classroom distractions, or assigning a specific teacher to review daily assignments with the child in order to improve the behavior and academic performance of affected children.^[69] Works when given in small quantities with breaks in between,^[70] when novel tasks with multimodal presentation and decreased noise levels are found to enhance their performances.^[71]

7.3 Social skills training

Social skills training have been found to cause improvement in behavior of ADHD children.

7.4 Medication and behavioral intervention combined

Treatment approaches of either medication or behavioral modification on its own have several shortcomings. These can be reduced when the two approaches are combined, with suggestions that the primary symptoms are most successfully treated by medication, and the secondary symptoms by behavioral approaches.^[72]

VIII. Oral Manifestations In Children With ADHD

Children with ADHD have been found to be at a greater risk of developing carious lesions than control groups in terms of more decayed, missing and filled teeth as assessed by the DMFT index.^[73] Children with ADHD have a higher prevalence of mineralization disturbances compared to control groups in various studies.^[74, 75] Higher rates of bruxism^[74], were also found in children with ADHD especially among those medicated with amphetamine or methylphenidate.^[76] Risk of sustaining traumatic dental injuries has also been reported to be higher in ADHD cases.^[77] Amphetamine medication may predispose to gingival enlargement.^[78] Obnoxious oral habits including nail biting, lip biting, and/or biting or chewing on other objects (pens and pencils) have been found.^[74] Disruptive behavior, dyskinesia (tics) or hyperactivity following medications prescribed for ADHD can pose difficulties during a dental appointment.^[76] Studies indicate that children with ADHD have inappropriate health behavior, such as higher risk for overeating and consumption of alcohol and tobacco use.^[79, 80, 81, 82] Children with ADHD are more likely to exhibit significant anxiety associated with dental treatment.^[83] Caffeinated beverages, including coffee and soda, which have been used for improving cognitive performance, renders an individual more susceptible to caries because of the sugar and acid contents in the same.^[84] Non-effective tooth brushing has been found in these children due to difficulties with attention and starting and completing activities that are not stimulating to them.^[85, 86, 87] In addition, there are often parent-child conflicts, which might influence their oral health behavior.^[88]

IX. Treatment Considerations And Approaches In Dental Office

Considering the prevalence and chronic nature of ADHD, it is very likely that these patients will be seen in all dental practices.

- Treating the ADHD patient in the dental office requires knowledge of health history/medication implications, recognition of possible oral presentations, and flexibility in adjusting the treatment plan.
- Dentist should recommend the parent/caregiver to have a talk with the child regarding the dental appointment, taking caution as to avoid obnoxious terms like ‘shot’ ‘pain’ ‘drill’ etc.
- Timing the appointment is important. Many of the children will be under medications. ADHD medications should ideally be taken 30-60 minutes prior to the dental visit, under the influence of the drug, procedures can be carried out under enhanced cognition and behavior.^[84] Between doses of short-acting stimulants, children are not covered by medication and thus may be highly symptomatic of ADHD. Further, they may experience “rebound” between doses. It is advisable to avoid dental appointments during this phase.
- ADHD children are inattentive, easily get distracted, have a short attention span and tend to forget instructions that come in a sequence. Therefore, instructions should be short, direct and issued one at a time.^[89]
- It should be explained to the child at the outset of the visit as to what behavior is expected of him or her. Positive reinforcements including praising appreciable behavior and small, tangible rewards are likely to induce continued good behavior.^[24]
- Behavioral contracting can also be tried by the clinician – either in verbal or written form. For example, the clinician might offer that when he or she is done treating the child’s teeth, then the child can play with his or her favorite toy for a brief period of time.
- Breaks are an important component in working with ADHD children. For guidelines on whether breaks will be necessary, how often to provide breaks, and duration of breaks, the clinician should consider consulting with the child’s parents. The child can be informed prior to starting procedure that breaks will be given during which the child will be able to play.
- Though the child would appreciate a break from the dental procedure, it will most probably be difficult getting the child back to the dental chair to resume the procedure after a break. It is always preferable to

give the child an advance notice to facilitate this transition. For example, the clinician can inform the child that the break is almost over, he can play for another couple of minutes and then he has to return to the dental chair. It should be kept in mind to praise the child if he sticks to the time and returns to the chair without fussing.

- Parents/caregivers can be consulted regarding the behavior, likes and dislikes of the child can be taken into consideration in an attempt to make the visit successful. ^[89]
- Consultation with primary care physician is extremely important especially in cases of multiple comorbid conditions.
- Comprehensive dental history should be recorded which includes history of oral habits, ^[74] bruxism, ^[76] dyskinesia/tics, smoking, self-medications, ^[84] caffeinated beverages, dietary habits including frequency of eating, types of snacks, drinks between meals etc. ^[88]
- Topical fluoride treatments should be considered to help impede the decay process.
- Local anesthesia should be used with caution. Attempts should be made at achieving profound anesthesia, so that endogenous epinephrine is not released which could react with medications (especially methylphenidate).
- Use of Tell-Show-Do technique of behavior management has been found to be useful in managing children with ADHD during a dental procedure. ^[90]
- Multiple short visits will be more successful than one prolonged visit.

X. Tables

<p>Inattentive presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes.• Has difficulty sustaining attention.• Does not appear to listen.• Struggles to follow through on instructions.• Has difficulty with organization.• Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring a lot of thinking.• Loses things.• Is easily distracted.• Is forgetful in daily activities
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Table 1. Symptoms of attention deficit as stated in DSM-5

<p>Hyperactive-impulsive presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair.• Has difficulty remaining seated.• Runs about or climbs excessively in children; extreme restlessness in adults.• Difficulty engaging in activities quietly.• Acts as if driven by a motor; adults will often feel inside like they were driven by a motor.• Talks excessively.• Blurts out answers before questions have been completed.• Difficulty waiting or taking turns.• Interrupts or intrudes upon others.

Table 2 Symptoms of hyperactivity as stated in DSM-5

XI. Conclusion

ADHD is a highly prevalent condition among children. It presents a clinical challenge to the oral health professionals. Oral health care and maintenance is compromised in children with ADHD. Professionals should understand that ADHD is a complex disorder that could require an adjustment in their treatment plan and daily schedule in order to deliver successful treatment and promote good oral health for this special group of children.

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