Improved but Still Impaired: Symptom-Impairment Correspondence Among Youth With Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Receiving Community-Based Care.


OBJECTIVE::
To explore correspondences between the trajectories of symptoms and impairments in youth with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) being treated by in primary care settings.

METHODS::
Parents of youth (n = 1976) rated their child's symptoms of inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity, and impairment across a variety of domains. Multilevel models were estimated to characterize the trajectories of symptoms and impairment and to determine whether changes in symptom dimension trajectories corresponded to changes in impairment trajectories over time.

RESULTS::
Results indicated that symptom dimensions initially improved, then leveled off, and then decreased minimally. However, impairment domains remained largely stable (i.e., neither improved nor worsened). Improvement in inattention symptoms were associated with improved ratings of writing impairment, and improved ratings of hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms were associated with improved relationship with peers.

CONCLUSIONS::
Youths with ADHD who are treated by their community pediatrician tend to initially improve in their symptom presentation, although this symptom reduction plateaus and is not associated with corresponding improvements in most areas of impairment.