Apgar Scores Are Associated with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Symptom Severity

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Abstract

Objective:
Adverse events during pregnancy and delivery have been linked to attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Previous studies have investigated Apgar scores, which assess the physical condition of newborns, in relation to the risk of developing ADHD. We propose to go one step further and examine if Apgar scores are associated with ADHD symptom severity in children already diagnosed with ADHD.

Method:
ADHD symptoms severity, while off medication, was compared in 2 groups of children with ADHD: those with low (≤6, n = 52) and those with higher (≥7, n = 400) Apgar scores sequentially recruited from the ADHD clinic.

Results:
Children with low Apgar at 1 minute after birth had more severe symptoms as assessed by the externalizing scale of the Child Behaviour Checklist, the Conners’ Global Index for Parents, and the DSM-IV hyperactivity symptoms count (P = 0.02, <0.01, <0.01, respectively).

Conclusion:
Low 1-minute Apgar scores are associated with a significant increase in ADHD symptom severity. These findings underline the importance of appropriate pregnancy and perinatal care.