Assessment of anxiety in autism spectrum disorders and in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Fortea-Sevilla MS, Escandell-Bermudez MO, Castro-Sanchez JJ, Martos-Perez J.


Abstract

INTRODUCTION:
The identification of factors that influence attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism spectrum disorders (ASD) will allow the development of intervention strategies that will benefit the personal and social adjustment of these individuals. It is well known that children with developmental disorders have a higher risk of presenting symptoms of anxiety than typically developing children.

AIM:
To assess the perception of anxiety of a group of children and adolescents with ADHD or ASD and the anxiety their parents believe their children have, through the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorder (SCARED).

SUBJECTS AND METHODS:
Participants were 107 children and adolescents, 73 diagnosed with ADHD and 34 with ASD, with ages ranging between 8 and 17 years (91 boys and 16 girls), and their respective fathers or mothers (53 fathers and 54 mothers). All participants completed the corresponding version of the SCARED in the presence of one of the researchers.

RESULTS:
The results show differences in anxiety factors. Usually, these differences indicate higher levels of anxiety—both in parents and in children—in children and adolescents diagnosed with ADHD versus those diagnosed with ASD.

CONCLUSIONS:
There are significant differences between the levels of anxiety shown both by children and adolescents diagnosed with ADHD and those diagnosed with ASD, and in the levels of anxiety perceived by their parents.