The connection of temperament with ADHD Occurrence and Persistence into adulthood – an Investigation in 18 year old Males

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Abstract

Background:
This study intended to determine whether certain traits of temperament are associated with former and current ADHD symptomatology in a non-clinical sample of 18 year old males.

Methods:
We performed a cross sectional descriptive study of 3280 men during the examination for military service. The investigation included a socio-demographic questionnaire, screening for substance abuse, temperament (TEMPS-M), past (WURS) and current (ADHD symptom checklist) ADHD symptomatology.

Results:
We found a correlation of cyclothymic (p<.001), irritable (p<.001) and anxious (p<.05) temperament with occurrence and severity of past and present ADHD symptomatology. No significant correlation has been detected for hyperthymic and depressive temperament. Judged retrospectively, ADHD symptoms were strongly consistent over time.

Limitations:
The sample consists of men only. These had to be fit enough to be enlisted for military service; men with severe mental or physical disorders were thus excluded. Furthermore, the cross-sectional study design does not allow making conclusions about the temporal relationships between ADHD symptoms and substance misuse.

Conclusions:
These results indicate that a temperament based approach towards those affected by ADHD might be useful. Subtyping ADHD by integrating temperament profiles in diagnosis and treatment of the disorder could help explain some of the heterogeneity of the disease.