Neuropsychological Measures in the Diagnosis of ADHD in Preschool - Can Developmental Research Inform Diagnostic Practice?

Julia Merkt; Michael Siniatchkin; Franz Petermann

Journal of Attention Disorders (March, 2016)
doi: 10.1177/1087054716629741

Abstract

Objective:
The diagnosis of ADHD in preschool is challenging. Behavioral ratings are less reliable, but the value of neuropsychological tests in the diagnosis of ADHD has been debated.

Method:
This article provides an overview of neuropsychological measures utilized in preschoolers with ADHD (3-5 years). In addition, the manuscript discusses the extent to which these measures have been tested for their diagnostic capacity.

Results:
The diagnostic utility of computerized continuous performance tests and working memory subtests from IQ-batteries has been demonstrated in a number of studies by assessing their psychometric properties, sensitivity, and specificity. However, findings from developmental and basic research attempting to describe risk factors that explain variance in ADHD show the most consistent associations of ADHD with measures of delay aversion.

Conclusion:
Results from developmental research could benefit studies that improve ADHD diagnosis at the individual level. It might be helpful to consider testing as a structured situation for behavioral observation by the clinician.