Psychomotor development and learning difficulties in preschool children with probable attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: An epidemiological study in Navarre and La Rioja.


Abstract

INTRODUCTION:
ADHD symptoms begin to appear at preschool age. ADHD may have a significant negative impact on academic performance. In Spain, there are no standardized tools for detecting ADHD at preschool age, nor is there data about the incidence of this disorder.

OBJECTIVE:
To evaluate developmental factors and learning difficulties associated with probable ADHD and to assess the impact of ADHD in school performance.

METHODS:
We conducted a population-based study with a stratified multistage proportional cluster sample design.

RESULTS:
We found significant differences between probable ADHD and parents' perception of difficulties in expressive language, comprehension, and fine motor skills, as well as in emotions, concentration, behaviour, and relationships. Around 34% of preschool children with probable ADHD showed global learning difficulties, mainly in patients with the inattentive type. According to the multivariate analysis, learning difficulties were significantly associated with both delayed psychomotor development during the first 3 years of life (OR: 5.57) as assessed by parents, and probable ADHD (OR: 2.34).

CONCLUSIONS: There is a connection between probable ADHD in preschool children and parents' perception of difficulties in several dimensions of development and learning. Early detection of ADHD at preschool ages is necessary to start prompt and effective clinical and educational interventions.