Management of ADHD in children and adolescents: clinical audit in a South African setting.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES:
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is common, yet under-recognised and undertreated, particularly in low socio-economic settings. Little is known about compliance to evidence-based guidelines in low- and middle-income countries, and no clinical audits have been published in Africa. We undertook to measure compliance in a South African setting using the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for ADHD as the gold standard to compare compliance and socio-demographic characteristics between two treatment locations in Cape Town and to generate an audit checklist for standardising care.

METHODS:
The study used a sample of 100 randomly selected cases of school-age patients diagnosed with ADHD, at the Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital and University of Cape Town, South Africa. Fifty cases each from a central and a peripheral clinic location were reviewed retrospectively using audit tools, including 17 audit standards derived from NICE guidelines. We defined compliance as "good" with ≥80%, "fair" with 50-79%, and "poor" with <50% adherence.

RESULTS:
Compliance was low, with only four audit standards rated as "good". Physical monitoring was especially poor. The central group received more treatment options and relatively safer monitoring.

CONCLUSIONS:
We recommend introducing structured protocols followed by re-auditing to improve service delivery, and present a checklist for use in future audit cycles.