Challenges and Limitations to Treating ADHD in Incarcerated Populations.

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Abstract

An often underappreciated and hard-to-treat condition in correctional institutions is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Although there are many effective psychopharmacologic treatments for ADHD, such as various formulations of amphetamines, many physicians are hesitant to prescribe controlled stimulants in correctional settings because of concerns about abuse and safety. Although nonstimulant alternatives are available, they are generally seen as less effective than stimulants. However, there are many unique factors regarding corrections populations and their responses to treatment, which makes it difficult to know what the ideal treatment regimen would be for this population. We review the standard treatments for ADHD, for prescribing in correctional institutions, barriers to using medications for off-label treatment of ADHD, and suggest future research that could better guide correctional treatment staff on how to approach patients with ADHD.