Interventions in ADHD: A comparative review of stimulant medications and behavioral therapies

Adnan Rajeh, MD, Shabbir Amanullah, MD, FRCPsych, CCT, FRCPC (Adjunct Professor), K. Shivakumar, MD, MPH, MRCPsyCh (FRCPC Consultant Psychiatrist, Associate Professor), Julie Cole, BA, MLIS

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Abstract

ADHD has a prevalence of approximately 10% in children with evidence supporting its continuance into adulthood. This has a significant impact on how we address treatment at substance abuse facilities and also has implications for personal and occupational functioning. A lack of evidence to support the superiority of any one intervention over the other has created difficulties for both clinicians and parents. A recent review highlights long-term and short-term outcomes (Craig et al., 2015). This article reviews the benefits and pitfalls of both pharmacological interventions and behavioral therapies in the treatment of ADHD. Key articles were reviewed on the benefits and side effects of stimulants, the methods and benefits of behavioral interventions, and the effects of combination therapy. Google Scholar, PsychINFO, Medline, Cochrane, and CINAHL were searched with the following search words: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD, Stimulant Medication, Behavioral Interventions, Combination Therapy, Cognitive Therapy, Functioning and Growth. It was found that stimulants are very effective during the period in which they are taken. While short-term benefits are clear, longer-term ones are not. Behavioral interventions play a key role for long-term improvement of executive functioning and organizational skills. There is a paucity of long-term randomized placebo controlled studies and current literature is inconclusive on what is the preferred intervention.