**ADHD and Depression Symptoms in Parent Couples Predict Response to Child ADHD and ODD Behavior**

Brian T. Wymbs; Anne E. Dawson; Theresa E. Egan; Gina M. Sacchetti; Sean T. Tams; Frances A. Wymbs


Abstract

Parents of children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) often have elevated ADHD and depressive symptoms, both of which increase the risk of ineffective parenting and interparental discord. However, little is known about whether child ADHD/ODD behavior and parent ADHD or depressive symptoms uniquely or synergistically predict the quality of parenting and interparental communication during triadic (mother-father-child) interactions. Ninety parent couples, including 51 who have children diagnosed with ADHD, were randomly assigned to interact with a 9–12 year-old confederate child (84 % male) exhibiting either ADHD/ODD-like behavior or typical behavior. Parents reported their own ADHD and depressive symptoms, and parents and observers rated the quality of parenting and interparental communication during the interaction. Actor-partner interdependence modeling indicated that child ADHD/ODD behavior predicted less positive and more negative parenting and communication, independent of adult ADHD and depressive symptoms. Parent couples including two parents with elevated ADHD communicated more positively while managing children exhibiting ADHD/ODD behavior than couples managing children behaving typically or couples with only one parent with elevated ADHD symptoms. Parent couples including one parent with, and one parent without, elevated ADHD or depressive symptoms parented less positively and more negatively, and communicated more negatively, when managing children exhibiting ADHD/ODD behavior than when managing children behaving typically. Taken together, depending on the similarity of ADHD and depressive symptom levels in parent couples, adults managing children exhibiting ADHD/ODD behavior may parent or communicate positively or negatively. Findings highlight the need to consider the psychopathology of both parents when treating children with ADHD in two-parent homes.