Adverse Childhood Experiences and ADHD Diagnosis at Age 9 in a National Urban Sample.


Abstract

OBJECTIVE:
To examine associations between adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and ADHD at age 9 using longitudinal data and assess the extent to which ACEs during middle childhood are independently associated with ADHD at age 9.

METHODS:
We conducted a secondary analysis of data from the Fragile Families urban birth cohort 5 and 9 year interviews. The sample was limited to children for whom mothers were the primary caregiver and mother-reported information on 8 ACEs and ADHD were available at age 5 and 9. We examined associations between ACEs and parent-reported ADHD at age 9 using logistic regression controlling for potential confounders.

RESULTS:
1572 children were included. 48% were African American. 11% had parent-reported ADHD at age 9. 41% and 42% experienced ≥ 1 ACE by age 5 and between ages 5 and 9 respectively. ACEs before age 5 were associated with ADHD at age 9. One, two, and ≥ three ACEs between age 5 and 9 were associated with ADHD at age 9 even after controlling for ACEs before age 5 and ADHD at age 5 (Adjusted odds ratio (AOR): 1.9, 95% confidence interval (CI): 1.2-3; AOR: 2.1, 95% CI: 1.2-3.8; and AOR: 2.2, 95% CI 1.1-4.3).

CONCLUSION:
In this study of urban children, ACEs occurring both before age 5 and between ages 5 and 9 were associated with ADHD at age 9. Even after controlling for early childhood ACEs and ADHD at age 5, the association between ADHD and ACEs in middle childhood remained significant, highlighting the importance of screening and intervention throughout childhood.