Impact of depressive/anxiety symptoms on the quality of life of adolescents with ADHD: a community-based 1-year prospective follow-up study

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Abstract

Adolescents with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) often exhibit functional impairment even those having less visible symptoms. Therefore, it is of great clinical importance to identify ADHD symptoms among adolescents in the community. Furthermore, little is known regarding the role of internalizing symptoms in their quality of life. Thus, this study aimed to screen ADHD in a sample of high school students using the Adult ADHD Self-report Scale (ASRS) and to investigate the impact of internalizing symptoms on their well-being. In the first year, adolescents aged 15–17 years old from a senior high school (N = 1947) completed the Adult ADHD Self-rating Scale (ASRS), Wender Utah Rating Scale, Impulsiveness Scale, Beck’s Depression Inventory and Beck’s Anxiety Inventory. In the second year, the World Health Organization Quality of Life-BREF was applied for the measurement of their psychosocial outcomes. Results showed that adolescents with higher ASRS scores manifested more severe concurrent depressive and anxiety symptoms. ADHD symptoms among these adolescents were significantly associated with poorer quality of life 1 year later (p < 0.001). And both depressive and anxiety symptoms were mediators in the relationship between ADHD symptoms and quality of life. The finding of this study supports that the concurrent internalizing symptoms may underlie the negative relations between ADHD symptoms and quality of life in adolescents in the community. The application of ASRS in adolescents may help clinicians in early intervention for their ADHD problems as well as emotional symptoms.