High adult ADHD prevalence rates in abstinent alcohol dependent patients during inpatient rehabilitation requires a disorder-specific diagnostic work-up and therapy

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Background:
Adult attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is frequent yet often under-recognized in alcohol use disorder (AUD). ADHD has a negative impact on AUD treatment efficacy and is associated with a more severe course of substance use.

Aim:
Our aim was to measure prevalence of ADHD in alcohol dependent patients with prolonged abstinence during long-term inpatient rehabilitation and to offer medication to newly diagnosed patients with ADHD.

Methods:
All alcohol dependent patients starting inpatient treatment from 1 – 10/2016 were asked to participate (n = 624). After inclusion, a structured interview (DIVA) for ADHD was administered at 4 to 5 weeks after treatment initiation. Patients with suspected ADHD had to pass two additional expert interviews before a final diagnostic decision was made.

Results:
We found an ADHD prevalence rate of 20.6% (n = 93) in 452 alcohol dependent patients. Only 8 ADHD patients had been diagnosed with ADHD prior to admission. 56 and 17 patients were treated with Ritalin adult® or Strattera® which led to partial or full remission in 44 and 6 patients, respectively. 10 and 7 patients discontinued medication with Ritalin adult® or Strattera® due to side effects, respectively.

Conclusion:
Despite our conservative study design, we found a high prevalence rate of previously undiagnosed ADHD in our inpatient alcohol dependent patients. These patients want and profit from medication with Ritalin adult® or Strattera®.