Clinical Profile of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Impact of Ethnic and Social Diversities in Israel

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Background:
Despite the increased worldwide recognition of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), there is a variability in the diagnostic rate of both ADHD and its comorbidities. These diversities are probably related to the methodology and instruments used for the diagnosis of ADHD and to awareness and cultural interpretation of its existence.

Objectives:
To identify consistent differences in the clinical profile of Arab and Jewish children with ADHD in Israel who differ in cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic background.

Methods:
We analyzed the data of 823 children and adolescents with ADHD (516 Jews and 307 Arabs) and compared the clinical characteristics between these two ethnic groups. All patients were evaluated in two neuropsychiatric and child development centers in northern Israel: one in Haifa and one in Hadera. Children with autism and intellectual disabilities were excluded.

Results:
The distribution of ADHD subtypes was similar in both populations. However, learning disorders and psychiatric comorbidities (behavioral difficulties and anxiety) were reported more frequently in the Jewish population. The most commonly reported adverse effects to psychostimulants were mood changes, anorexia, headache, insomnia and rebound effect, and were more frequently reported in the Jewish population (42.0% vs.18.0%, P < 0.05).

Conclusions:
We assume that these differences are related to cultural and socioeconomic factors. We suggest that the physician take cultural background into consideration when treating patients with ADHD.