ABSTRACT

Objective: To explore predictors of 8-year school-based behavioural outcomes in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Methods: We examined potential baseline predictors of school-based behavioural outcomes in children who completed the 8-year follow-up in the multimodal treatment study of children with ADHD. Stepwise logistic regression and receiver operating characteristic (ROC) analysis identified baseline predictors that were associated with a higher risk of truancy, school discipline, and in-school fights.

Results: Stepwise regression analysis explained between 8.1% (in-school fights) and 12.0% (school discipline) of the total variance in school-based behavioural outcomes. Logistic regression identified several baseline characteristics that were associated with school-based behavioral difficulties 8 years later, including being male (associated with truancy and school discipline), African American (school discipline, in-school fights), increased conduct disorder (CD) symptoms (truancy), decreased affection from parents (school discipline), ADHD severity (in-school fights), and study site (truancy and school discipline). ROC analyses identified the most discriminative predictors of truancy, school discipline, and in-school fights, which were Aggression and Conduct Problem Scale Total score, family income, and race, respectively.

Conclusions: A modest, but a nontrivial portion of school-based behavioural outcomes, was predicted by baseline childhood characteristics. Exploratory analyses identified modifiable (lack of paternal involvement, lower parental knowledge of behavioural principles, and parental use of physical punishment), somewhat modifiable (income and having comorbid CD), and nonmodifiable (African American and male) factors that were associated with school-based behavioural difficulties. Future research should confirm that the associations between earlier specific parenting behaviours and poor subsequent school-based behavioural outcomes are, indeed, causally related and independent co-occurring childhood psychopathology. Future research might target increasing paternal involvement and parental knowledge of behavioural principles and reduce the use of physical punishment to improve school-based behavioural outcomes in children with ADHD.