


Abstract

Over the last two decades, the use of ADHD medication in US youth has markedly increased. However, less is known about ADHD medication use among European children and adolescents. A repeated cross-sectional design was applied to national or regional data extracts from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) for calendar years 2005/2006-2012. The prevalence of ADHD medication use was assessed, stratified by age and sex. Furthermore, the most commonly prescribed ADHD medications were assessed. ADHD medication use prevalence increased from 1.8% to 3.9% in the Netherlands cohort (relative increase: +111.9%), from 3.3% to 3.7% in the US cohort (+10.7%), from 1.3% to 2.2% in the German cohort (+62.4%), from 0.4% to 1.5% in the Danish cohort (+302.7%), and from 0.3% to 0.5% in the UK cohort (+56.6%). ADHD medication use was highest in 10-14-year olds, peaking in the Netherlands (7.1%) and the US (8.8%). Methylphenidate use predominated in Europe, whereas in the US amphetamines were nearly as common as methylphenidate. Although there was a substantially greater use of ADHD medications in the US cohort, there was a relatively greater increase in ADHD medication use in youth in the four European countries. ADHD medication use patterns in the US differed markedly from those in western European countries.