Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, delay discounting, and risky financial behaviors: A preliminary analysis of self-report data.

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Abstract

Delay discounting—often referred to as hyperbolic discounting in the financial literature—is defined by a consistent preference for smaller, immediate rewards over larger, delayed rewards, and by the failure of future consequences to curtail current consummatory behaviors. Previous research demonstrates (1) excessive delay discounting among individuals with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), (2) common neural substrates of delay discounting and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms of ADHD, and (3) associations between delay discounting and both debt burden and high-interest rate borrowing. This study extends prior research by examining associations between ADHD symptoms, delay discounting, and an array of previously unevaluated financial outcomes among 544 individuals (mean age 35 years). Controlling for age, income, sex, education, and substance use, ADHD symptoms were associated with delay discounting, late credit card payments, credit card balances, use of pawn services, personal debt, and employment histories (less time spent at more jobs). Consistent with neural models of reward processing and associative learning, more of these relations were attributable to hyperactive-impulsive symptoms than inattentive symptoms. Implications for financial decision-making and directions for future research are discussed.