Smoking, alcohol and drug use in youth and adults with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder

Sydney Osland, Lauren Hirsch, Tamara Pringsheim

British Journal of Psychiatry Open May 2017, 3 (3) 141-146
DOI: 10.1192/bjpo.bp.116.004317

Abstract

Background
Previous research suggests a relationship between attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and smoking, alcohol and illicit drug use, however, most studies have focused on adolescents or young adults, or clinically ascertained samples.

Aims
To analyze population-based data on the relationship between ADHD and at-risk health behaviors in adolescents and adults.

Method
Data were derived from a Statistics Canada population-based health survey. The association between the diagnosis of ADHD and smoking, alcohol use, and illicit drug use was examined.

Results
Individuals with ADHD started smoking at a younger age. They consumed more alcoholic drinks on drinking days, and women with ADHD were more likely to engage in binge drinking. Women over the age of 25 and men with ADHD were more likely to meet alcohol-dependence lifetime criteria. People with ADHD were at a greater risk of drug misuse and dependence.

Conclusions
People with ADHD are more likely to partake in at-risk behaviors.