Screening for adult attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in a psychiatric outpatient population with specific focus on sex differences

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Background/Aims:
Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is often overlooked in adults; moreover, the problem seems to be even more critical in women. In the present, observational screening study, a clinical, particularly adult outpatient population was examined regarding frequency and severity of a likely ADHD, whereby sex differences were of particular interest.

Methods:
224 participants, 146 men, and 78 women were included. Based on data recorded with the self-rating WHO screening instrument Adult ADHD Self-Report-Scale (ASRS-v1.1), it was examined how many participants were conspicuous for adult ADHD by exceeding a predefined cutoff value (COV ≥4 for ASRS-6 and ≥12 for ASRS-18). To examine frequency distributions, $\chi^2$-square tests were conducted. For the inferential statistical comparison of means, t-tests for independent samples or Mann-Whitney U-tests were calculated. In cases where distribution requirements were violated, were conducted.

Results:
34.4% of the sample was screened positive in the ASRS-v1.1 screener short version, ASRS-6, while 17.4% were conspicuous on the symptom checklist, ASRS-18. There were indeed more men screened positive, but the difference in the frequency between the sexes was not statistically significant, indicating a balanced sex ratio. Further, the severity of ADHD core symptoms inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity was examined by comparing ASRS-18 symptom subscale scores. In concordance with the hypothesis, men and women did not differ in severity of symptoms.

Conclusion:
Results indicate that women might be affected by ADHD in a comparable manner as men; this emphasizes the importance of the awareness of ADHD in both sexes in clinical practice.