Comparison of Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Depending on the Age of Being Diagnosed in Childhood and Adulthood

Seong Woo Cho, Yeon Jung Lee, Seong Ae Lee, Minha Hong, Sang Min Lee, Jin Cheol Park, Geon Ho Bahn


Abstract

Objectives:
The study aimed to identify the characteristics of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) that was not diagnosed in childhood or adolescence but only in adulthood.

Methods:
The characteristics of patients diagnosed with ADHD in adulthood were compared with those of patients diagnosed in childhood were assessed via a retrospective review of the medical records at one university hospital from 2005 to 2013. If the age at which they were confirmed as having ADHD was less than 19 years old, they were grouped as a childhood-diagnosed group (CD); if they were 19 years old or more, they were grouped as an adulthood-diagnosed group (AD).

Results:
The CD and AD included 50 (46.3%) and 58 (53.7%) patients, respectively. Inattention was the most common symptom in both groups. Behavioral and emotional problems were the second most frequent symptoms in the CD and AD, respectively. The intelligent quotient was significantly higher in the AD than in the CD. The most common comorbidity was a depression in the CD and personality disorder in the AD. The most common reason for visiting the hospital was a referral by acquaintances in the CD and media coverage in the AD.

Conclusion:
Clinicians should put ADHD on the index of suspicion when they examine adults with various psychiatric symptoms because the diagnosis of ADHD might have been missed in childhood and the symptoms of ADHD might have changed as they grew up.