Abstract

OBJECTIVE:
Adolescents with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are at increased risk for alcohol and marijuana use. This study's objective is to describe adolescents' ADHD-specific reasons for marijuana use, knowledge of ADHD-specific alcohol risks, and reported subspecialty provider messaging/education regarding alcohol use among adolescents with ADHD.

METHODS:
Youths with ADHD aged 12 to 18 years completed a survey about alcohol and marijuana use, ADHD-specific reasons for marijuana use, knowledge of ADHD-specific alcohol risks, and reported provider messaging/education regarding alcohol use. We assessed knowledge toward substance use using descriptive statistics. We used χ and t tests to determine whether knowledge or provider messaging/education differed by sociodemographic characteristics.

RESULTS:
Of the 96 participants, 61.5% were male, the average age was 15.7 years; 31.3% reported past-year alcohol use and 20.8% reported past-year marijuana use. The majority (65.2%) said "no/don't know" to both "Can alcohol make ADHD symptoms worse?" and "Can alcohol interfere or get in the way of the medications you take?" Older participants were more likely to correctly answer the medication question "yes." Despite most (74%) participants reporting that their provider asked about alcohol use, few youth reported that their providers gave specific messages/education that alcohol could make ADHD symptoms worse (9.4%) or interfere with ADHD medications (14.6%); older participants and past-year alcohol users were more likely to have received these alcohol-specific messages.

CONCLUSION:
Many youths with ADHD are unaware of the risks of alcohol use in relation to ADHD and providers are not consistently discussing these risks in the context of clinical ADHD care.