Diagnosis and Treatment of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Patients with Chronic Pain

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ABSTRACT

Aims:
To investigate rates of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in patients with chronic pain attending a pain clinic, the effects of a screening measure for ADHD in patients with chronic pain, and the effects of ADHD drugs on both pain and ADHD symptoms.

Methods:
We retrospectively surveyed 110 patients with chronic pain visiting the Anesthesiology and Pain Relief Center at the University of Tokyo in Japan, who had also consulted a psychiatrist, between April 2012 and July 2015.

Results:
Of the total of 110 patients with chronic pain, 35 (31.8%) were also diagnosed with ADHD, and the average Wender Utah Rating Scale (WURS) score among the ADHD patients was 39.0 ± 22.1 (n = 25). Only 36.0% of these patients exceeded the cutoff value, suggesting that 64.0% of the patients with ADHD were not identified by screening with the WURS. Twenty-six patients initiated treatment with ADHD medication, with dosage adjustment completed in 21. Of these 21 patients 20 (95.0%) had improved ADHD symptoms. Improved pain symptoms were observed in 14 patients (66.6%), with a reduction in the pain numerical rating scale of 64.7% ± 30.1%.

Conclusions:
This is the first study investigating the comorbidity of ADHD and chronic pain at pain clinics showing a high level of comorbidity and amelioration of pain and ADHD symptoms with treatment. Careful interpretation is required when the WURS is used to screen patients with chronic pain.