The effects of symptom information coaching on the feigning of adult ADHD.

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Abstract

College students without ADHD may feign symptoms of ADHD to gain access to stimulant medications and academic accommodations. Unfortunately, research has shown that it can be difficult to discriminate malingered from genuine ADHD symptomatology, especially when evaluations are based only on self-report questionnaires. The present study investigated whether nonclinical college students given no additional information could feign ADHD as successfully as those who were coached on symptoms of the disorder. Similar to Jasinski et al. (2011) and other research on feigned ADHD, a battery of neuropsychological, performance validity, and self-report tests was administered. Undergraduates with no history of ADHD or other psychiatric disorders were randomly assigned to 1 of 2 simulator groups: a coached group that was given information about ADHD symptoms, or a noncoached group that was given no such information. Both simulator groups were asked to feign ADHD. Their performance was compared to a genuine ADHD group and a nonclinical group asked to respond honestly. Self-report, neuropsychological, and performance validity test data are discussed in the context of the effect of coaching and its implications for ADHD evaluations. Symptom coaching did not have a significant effect on feigning success. Performance validity tests were moderately effective at detecting feigned ADHD.