Do Stimulants Reduce the Risk for Alcohol and Substance Use in Youth With ADHD? A Secondary Analysis of a Prospective, 24-Month Open-Label Study of Osmotic-Release Methylphenidate.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:
The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of stimulant treatment on risk for alcohol and illicit drug use in adolescents with ADHD.

METHOD:
Analysis of data derived from a prospective open-label treatment study of adolescent ADHD (n = 115, 76% male), and a historical, naturalistic sample of ADHD (n = 44, 68% male) and non-ADHD youth (n = 52, 73% male) of similar age and sex. Treatment consisted of extended-release methylphenidate in the clinical trial or naturalistic stimulant treatment. Self-report of alcohol and drug use was derived from a modified version of the Drug Use Screening Inventory.

RESULTS:
Rates of alcohol and drug use in the past year were significantly lower in the clinical trial compared with untreated and treated naturalistic ADHD comparators, and similar to rates in non-ADHD comparators.

CONCLUSION:
Well-monitored stimulant treatment may reduce the risk for alcohol and substance use in adolescent ADHD.