

Prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and comorbid psychiatric and behavioral problems among primary school students in western Saudi Arabia.

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Abstract

To determine the prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), subtypes of ADHD, and psychiatric, academic, and behavioral comorbidity in public primary school students in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. **Methods:** This is a cross-sectional study. A simple random sample of 6 primary government schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, was identified (3 male, 3 female), and a random sample of classes in each of grades 1-6 were selected. Between July and November 2016, teachers in these classes were asked to complete the Vanderbilt ADHD scale on all students in their classes. **Results:** A total of 929 students were screened. The overall prevalence of ADHD was 5% (5.3% in girls, 4.7% in boys). The most prevalent subtype of ADHD was combined type (2.7%), followed by hyperactive type (1.2%), and inattentive type (1.1%). The highest prevalence of ADHD overall was in grade 3 (7.1%) and the lowest prevalence in grade 6 (3.4%). Among students with ADHD, prevalence of comorbid psychiatric, academic, and behavioral problems was widespread (56.5% oppositional defiant disorder/conduct disorder, 54.4% impaired academic performance, 44.4% classroom behavioral problems, 41.3% depression/anxiety). Comorbid problems were especially prevalent in combined ADHD subtype and in boys. **Conclusions:** Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is common in primary school children in Jeddah, and is associated with widespread psychiatric, academic, and behavioral problems, especially in boys. These findings have implications for the diagnosis and treatment of this serious neurobehavioral disorder.