Are ADHD Screeners Safe to Use?

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Abstract

Objective:
To investigate whether administration of a common ADHD screener followed by generic feedback would affect college students’ subsequent symptom reports and cognitive performance.

Method:
Participants were 157 college students randomly assigned to an experimental group—which completed the World Health Organization Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale screener and received standard generic feedback—or a control group. All participants then completed a battery of cognitive tasks and a long-form symptom rating scale.

Results:
The experimental and control groups did not differ significantly in terms of their subsequent symptom reports or their performance on any cognitive tasks. These null results remained after considering possibilities such as unequal group variances and interactions between screening effects and gender.

Conclusion:
When administered judiciously alongside generic feedback in a group setting, this common ADHD screener does not appear to affect college students’ self-perceptions or cognitive abilities.