Pattern of video game use in children with ADHD and typical development.

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BACKGROUND:
Video game playing is a favorite leisure activity amongst children worldwide. Individuals with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) often lack of self-control which make them at risk for substance abuse and game addiction. However, there have been conflicting results between studies on the pattern of video gaming and game addiction between those with ADHD and healthy controls. We therefore compared the pattern of video game use and game addiction in Thai children with ADHD with healthy controls.

METHODS:
There were 80 participants with ADHD (median age 9.5 years) and 102 controls (median age 10 years) recruited in this study. ADHD was diagnosed by a developmental pediatrician. Each control’s teacher completed the ADHD questionnaire to ensure that the control did not have the diagnosis of ADHD. Pattern of video game use and Game Addiction Screening Test (GAST) were completed by participants’ parents.

RESULTS:
More than half of the children with and without ADHD spent more than 2 hours/day playing video games rather than engaging in other age-appropriate leisure activities, particularly on weekends. However, participants with ADHD had a higher rate of compulsive video game use than controls (37.5% vs. 11.8%, p <0.001).

CONCLUSIONS:
Video game playing was relatively prevalent in children with and without ADHD. Those with ADHD had a higher rate of problematic video game use than controls. The pattern of leisure activities including video game use should be obtained during health supervision visits. As such, those at risk for game addiction could be detected early, resulting in appropriate intervention.