

General practitioners' (GP) attitudes and knowledge about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in Ireland.

Adamis D, Tatlow-Golden M, Gavin B, McNicholas F.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

ADHD is the most frequent reason for attendance at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). General practitioners (GPs) play a key role in recognising symptoms, referring for assessment and supporting ongoing treatment. However, there is an ambiguous understanding of ADHD among GPs, and different attitudes regarding the validity of ADHD as a construct. The present study aims to explore and identify GPs attitudes and beliefs about ADHD in the Irish context, and to find out the association of those attitudes with other factors.

METHODS:

Representative sample of qualified GPs registered to the Irish Medical Directory. The survey included questions about GPs' practice, attitudes towards ADHD, knowledge of symptoms and workup for ADHD, previous training and personal experience of ADHD.

RESULTS:

A hundred and forty GPs participated (response rate 28%). Factor analysis indicated 58.8% expressed a positive attitude towards ADHD. Those who have positive attitudes were more likely to be between 36 and 55 years old, seeing fewer children with suspected ADHD per year and working as part of a primary care team. Years of practice, personal experience of ADHD, training and knowledge in ADHD and access to CAMHS or psychology were not significantly related to either positive or negative ADHD attitudes.

CONCLUSIONS:

Despite the high rates of ADHD among children, a slim majority of Irish GPs have positive attitudes towards ADHD. This could lead to undiagnosed or misdiagnosed cases. Strategies need to be considered to address this.