Pathway to care and clinical profile of children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in New Delhi, India

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:
Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common childhood neurobehavioral disorder, which may cause impairment in multiple domains. Understanding the pathway to care helps in planning effective early interventions. The study aims to provide a quantitative description of the factors affecting the help-seeking pathway.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:
The study was conducted at an outpatients department of a tertiary care multispecialty hospital. Fifty consecutive consenting children aged 5-15 years were screened and diagnosed for ADHD using Conners' Parent Rating Scale-Revised: Short Form, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders fourth edition text revision criteria, and Kiddie Schedule for affective disorders and schizophrenia. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to study the pathway of care, using the WHO template. The data were analyzed using appropriate parametric and nonparametric tests in SPSS software.

RESULTS:
The average delay from the onset of the illness to first consultation with a qualified health professional was $2.32 \pm 1.9$ years. Children with an urban background, from a nuclear family, with literate mothers, with a family income of more than Rs. 30,000/month, having hyperactive and combined type of ADHD, and who were referred by school teachers presented significantly earlier. The main source of referrals were school teachers and general medical practitioners. The most common parental beliefs for delay were the views that the "child is naughty" and that "hyperactivity is part of normal growth."

CONCLUSION:
Parents' help-seeking behavior is affected by different sociocultural beliefs. Such factors as the lack of recognition and awareness of ADHD, resulting in the delay in seeking treatment should be addressed through health promotion programs.