Epidemiology of Ritalin Prescription In 6-18 Years Old Israeli Children - Time to Change Policy

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION:
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a worldwide problem and treatment is controversial among physicians and parents.

OBJECTIVES:
To clarify the prescribing of methylphenidate to children in the center of Israel, the use and possible effect that gender, socioeconomic status (SES), ethnic and cultural characteristics play in the treatment of ADHD.

METHODS:
We assessed the prescription rate of methylphenidate in the years 2005, 2007 and 2011 in children and adolescents age 6-18 years provided from Sharon Shomron and Dan Petach Tikva Clalit Health Services pharmacies.

RESULTS:
Methylphenidate (MPH) prescriptions showed an increase in prevalence from 4.2% to 7.5% in the years 2007 to 2011, respectively. Jewish children were four times more likely to be prescribed MPH than Arab children, with significant discrepancies along SES and gender lines (p < .001). Higher socioeconomic status (SES) and male gender were associated with greater use of MPH. General pediatric prescription rates of MPH in all communities increased by 85%, compared with year 2007 statistics (p < .001).

CONCLUSIONS:
It is time to change policy. Efforts should be directed at over-treated and under-treated populations.

DISCUSSION:
Prescription patterns for MPH in children reflect diagnostic patterns of ADHD that appear to be heavily influenced by additive factors of SES, cultural attitudes and gender.