Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Medication Use in Adolescents: The Patient's Perspective

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Abstract

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study was to gain more insight into the attitudes of adolescents using medication for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

METHODS: A cross-sectional study among adolescents (aged 12-18 years) who filled at least two prescriptions for ADHD medication in the preceding year was conducted. Adolescents were invited to fill in an online questionnaire containing questions on sociodemographics, health status, illness perceptions, medication adherence, and medication beliefs.

RESULTS: We invited 1,200 adolescents of whom 181 adolescents (122 males, mean age 14.2 ± 1.7 years) completed the online questionnaire. They mostly used methylphenidate (n = 167; 92%) as a pharmacological treatment for ADHD. Half of the study population (n = 93; 51%) experienced side effects, such as decreased appetite and sleep problems. Most participants (n = 150; 83%) had an indifferent attitude (perceived low necessity and low concerns) toward their ADHD medication. More than half of the study population (n = 111; 61%) reported to be nonadherent based on the Medication Adherence Report Scale. The highest score of the Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire was on "treatment control," suggesting that adolescents do think their medication is effective, despite their indifferent drug attitude.

CONCLUSIONS: Most adolescents using ADHD medication had an indifferent attitude toward their medication and reported low adherence rates. These findings should be taken into account when treating adolescents with ADHD; regular counseling and monitoring of the pharmacological treatment might be useful to optimize treatment.