Estimated prevalence and associated risk factors of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) among medical college students in a Chinese population


Abstract

BACKGROUND:
To investigate the prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) among medical college students in a Chinese population.

METHODS:
A cross-sectional design was used to collect demographic data on participants and their symptoms of ADHD, anxiety, and depression. Data were collected through questionnaires filled out on a computer or through WeChat, a widely used social media app.

RESULTS:
The prevalence of ADHD among 5693 college students was 3.5% (3.02~3.98%). Individuals with ADHD showed higher scores on scales of anxiety and depression symptoms (both p < 0.05) than the general population. There was a significant difference in the prevalence of ADHD grouped by smoking, drinking, suicidal ideation, suicidal plans, suicidal attempt, anxiety and depression (p < 0.05). The odds ratio (OR) of ADHD was high for suicidal ideation, suicide plans, suicide attempts, anxiety and depression, with ORs of 5.901, 5.46, 6.011, 8.037 and 7.88, respectively. The ORs of suicidal behaviors for ADHD were decreased after adjusting for covariates such as drinking, smoking and depression.

LIMITATIONS:
The sample was exclusively selected from three medical-related colleges, which might not be best representation of college students in China. Furthermore, majority of the participants were females.

CONCLUSIONS:
ADHD remains a common disorder among Chinese medical college students and is significantly associated with suicidal behaviors, anxiety and depression. It is important to increase awareness and promote effective interventions to this particular population.