

The danger of being inattentive - ADHD symptoms and risky sexual behaviour in Russian adolescents

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Eur Psychiatry. 2018 Jan;47:42-48.
doi: 10.1016/j.eurpsy.2017.09.004.

Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Prior research has indicated that attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms may be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour (RSB). However, research on this association among adolescents has been comparatively limited and mainly confined to North America. The aim of this study was to examine if inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms were linked to RSB in a community cohort sample of Russian adolescents.

METHODS:

The study was based on a group of 537 adolescents from Northern Russia. Information on inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity as well as conduct problems was obtained through teacher ratings, while information on RSB (previous unprotected sex, number of sexual partners, sex while intoxicated and partner pregnancies), substance use, perception of risk, and parenting behaviour was based on students' self-reports. Binary logistic regression analysis was used to examine associations between the variables.

RESULTS:

Teacher-rated inattention symptoms predicted RSB, independently of co-morbid conduct problems, substance use, risk perception, and different parenting styles (parental warmth, involvement and control). In addition, male sex, binge drinking and a lower assessment of perceived risk were all significantly associated with RSB in an adjusted model. Neither teacher-rated hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms nor conduct problems were linked to RSB in the full model.

CONCLUSIONS:

Deficits in planning and organizing behaviours, being easily distracted and forgetful seem to be of importance for RSB in Russian adolescents. This highlights the importance of discriminating between different ADHD symptoms in adolescence to prevent risk behaviours and their potentially detrimental outcomes on health and well-being.