

Abstract

Background:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a common disorder in children and adolescents and is associated with high rate of psychiatric co-morbidity. Youths with ADHD are at higher risk than youths without ADHD of developing Depressive Disorders. Depression occurring in youths with ADHD displayed greater levels of psychosocial impairment and higher rates of suicidality and hospitalizations, than youths with either depression or ADHD alone. There was very limited data on co-morbid depression in Chinese adolescents with ADHD in our locality.

Objectives:

This study aimed to determine the prevalence of co-morbid depressive disorders, and identify the correlates with depressive disorders and the level of depressive symptoms in Chinese adolescents with ADHD attending a specialist clinic.

Methods:

This was a cross-sectional study which recruited a random sample of 120 adolescents aged 12 to below 18 clinically diagnosed with ADHD attending a child and adolescent psychiatric clinic. Psychiatric diagnoses were made according to the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children – version IV (DISC- IV) using the parallel Youth and Parents versions. The Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) was used to measure the level of depressive symptoms.

Result:

The one-year prevalence rate of depressive disorders was found to be 10% (95% CI=5.8% to 16.7%) in this clinical sample of adolescents with ADHD. Half of the subjects had at least one psychiatric co-morbid disorder, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and anxiety disorders were the commonest. Thirty percent adolescents with ADHD had clinically significant depressive symptoms. Co-morbid anxiety disorders and siblings having psychiatric illness were associated with higher risk of depressive disorders; while ODD, any anxiety disorders and parental separation were associated with higher level of depressive symptoms.

Conclusion:

The prevalence rate of depressive disorders and the level of depressive symptoms in this clinical sample of adolescents with ADHD were higher compared with local community sample. Identification of associated factors to inform early detection of depression and guide development of appropriate intervention would improve the eventual outcome of youths with ADHD.