

Abstract

Background: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common and chronic childhood onset illness with a high rate of comorbidity. Common comorbid psychiatric disorders include oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), anxiety disorders and depressive disorders. Studies showed that children with ADHD had a higher risk of developing depressive disorders than those without ADHD. So far there is only limited data on comorbidity in local ADHD children.

Objectives: The aims of this study were to determine the prevalence of depression and level of depressive symptoms in school-age children with ADHD, to determine the prevalence of psychiatric comorbidity in this group of children and to explore the associating factors of these conditions.

Methodology: Two hundred new and consecutive patients from a regional child and adolescent psychiatry out-patient clinic were recruited from August 2011 to July 2012 for this cross-sectional study. Psychiatric diagnoses were made according to the Diagnostic Scheduled Interview for Children Version IV (DISC-IV). The Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) and Cultural-Free Self-Esteem Inventory-2 (CFSEI-2) were used to measure the level of depressive symptoms and self-esteem.

Results: The comorbidity rate of any psychiatric disorders was 43.5%. The comorbidity

rate for ODD, anxiety disorders and depression were 27%, 22% and 3% respectively.

Young age, having any psychiatric comorbidity, having comorbid ODD, not receiving ADHD drug treatment, having a sibling with psychiatric illness and having low self-esteem were found to be associated with a higher level of depressive symptoms.

Conclusion: Comorbidity rate is high in this clinical sample of ADHD children.

Identification of associating factors would inform early detection and intervention of depressive symptoms in children with ADHD.