

Category: Diagnosis and assessment of ADHD

THE ROLE OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS IN EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF ATTENTION DEFICIT / HEPERACTIVITY DISORDER

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Introduction and Objectives

Early identification of children with ADHD during preschool years is of the utmost importance for the implementation of effective treatment and the prevention of the emergence of secondary difficulties (Sonuga-Barke & Halperin, 2010). The objective of this study was to investigate the role that preschool educators can play on this purpose.

Methods

One hundred and forty one preschoolers, aged 4-5, were screened for ADHD with the ADHD Test (Gilliam, 1995), completed by their educators. The children identified with clinical scores of ADHD were followed up to the first class of primary school, and were re-assessed by their primary school teachers, who were unaware of the first evaluation. A control group, matched for age and sex, was also used.

Results

Twenty eight children obtained clinical scores of ADHD during the first evaluation and were reassessed as pupils of the primary school. Almost half of the participants in the clinical group also obtained clinical scores of ADHD when assessed by their teachers at primary school, indicating both a continuation in the symptomatology of the disorder and high possibilities of early identification as well. Furthermore, specific behaviours like co-cooperativeness, disruptive behaviour and aggressive behaviour showed stability and continuity over time.

Discussion

Early identification of ADHD before primary school is highly recommended and screening instruments designed for this purpose can be sufficiently reliable. The important role of preschool educators and the need for relevant training is discussed.

Key words: ADHD, early identification, academic performance

References

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