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SPECIAL ARTICLE

Pharmacotherapy of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
across the Life Cycle

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ABSTRACT

Objective

To evaluate the scope of the available therapeutic armamentarium in attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Method

The literature of medication trials in ADHD was systematically reviewed, with attention to issues of psychiatric comorbidity, age, gender, and ethnic background.

Results

One hundred fifty-five controlled studies of 5,768 children, adolescents, and adults have documented the efficacy of stimulants in an estimated 70% of subjects. The literature

clearly documents that stimulants not only improve abnormal behaviors of ADHD, but also self-esteem, cognition, and social and family function. However, response varied in different age groups and with certain comorbid conditions. In addition, there is an impressive body of literature documenting the efficacy of tricyclic antidepressants on ADHD in more than 1,000 subjects. Studies of alternative antidepressants, antipsychotics, antihypertensives, and other compounds were also reviewed.

Conclusions

The available literature indicates the important role of psychopharmacological agents in the reduction of the core symptoms of ADHD and associated impairments. More research is needed on alternative pharmacological treatments and to further evaluate established therapeutics beyond school-age Caucasian boys. In addition, more research is needed on the efficacy of treatment for comorbid ADHD, use of combined medications, and the combination of medication and psychosocial treatment.



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Key Words

attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder; psychopharmacology; comorbidity

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