

Evidence based management of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

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Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is among the most common neurodevelopmental disorders in children. Its hallmarks are hyperactivity, impulsiveness, and inattention beyond the norm for a child's age.

The disorder is frequently diagnosed in children with behavioural problems or in those who underachieve at school. Although the diagnosis is reliable if made by a standardised approach, concerns about the validity of the disorder often arise. At present there is no biological marker that clearly identifies affected children. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the disorder is unique or merely one end of the continuum of age appropriate behaviour.

You wonder how frequently academic difficulties or disruptive behaviours in a child are due to attention deficit disorder or to another psychiatric disorder; what tests will be helpful to diagnose the disorder; what treatments are effective; and what is the prognosis. For your patient, these questions need to be answered before you can decide on the best course of action.

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