The medical costs of ADHD

Executive summary

Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) starts in childhood, but persists into adulthood in approximately half of the cases. Not only is this condition impairing for the individual, it is also costly. To gain more insights in these costs, researchers calculated the medical costs of ADHD from anonymised German insurance data of 3.7 million people. The total surplus medical costs of a person with ADHD were 1598 euros. Most costs are made in ingpatient and outpatient care, with medication costs in third place. ADHD in adults is underdiagnosed in the insurance data compared to worldwide estimates, and hence potentially undertreated. Preventing the development of comorbidities with age should be the focus of mental healthcare, i.e. through continued treatment of adolescents into adulthood.

German insurance data

25,300 individuals in the database as ADHD-diagnosed. A reference group was randomly selected from the data of individuals without ADHD, matched on age and gender with the ADHD group.

Medical costs per person

- Hospital visits
- General Practitioner
- Psychologist / Psychiatrist
- ADHD medication
- Other medication
- Behavioural therapy
- Aids & remedies
- Sick pay

Total medical costs increase in adulthood

- Increase in other medication, psychotherapy, and sick pay

The risk of developing a comorbid disorder with ADHD is higher for adults

e.g. 22% of ADHD children and 39% of ADHD adults also have an anxiety disorder

- Anxiety: 15-17 years: >30 years
- Depression: 15-17 years: >30 years
- Substance abuse: 15-17 years: >30 years
- Obesity: 15-17 years: >30 years

Improve adult mental health care

ADHD is a lifelong, impairing condition that brings along substantial medical costs

ADHD in adults is underdiagnosed. Healthcare professionals need to be trained to recognise ADHD symptoms in adulthood.

Improving the transition from child to adult mental healthcare may reduce occurrence of comorbid disorders, and reduce costs


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