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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Introduction

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder also known as ADHD, can be hereditary, can be caused during pregnancy or at birth, to name a few, it is a brain disorder. However, the word disorder can be assumed as judgemental according to the National Center on Disability and Journalism, (2021) the word condition, could be an appropriate alternative, yet disorder is predominantly used in the medical profession. ADHD UK, (2022) suggests that around 5% of children are diagnosed with ADHD in the UK, the same percentage as the global prevalence. Nevertheless, this is an estimate, as there are differences within society of the condition starting, therefore not diagnosing at the same points.

Identify and Diagnose

ADHD can present itself in three different forms, with many symptoms for each, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2022a) Johns Hopkins Medicine, (n.d.) and Elmaghraby and Garayalde, (2022).

- Inattention
- Impulsive / hyperactive
- Combination

The child has hyperactivity, impulsive behaviour, can be easily distracted and have a low attention span. These behaviours can be portrayed as a misbehaving child, symptoms can affect a child's emotions and behaviour therefore, labelling the child as a naughty child according to Ali, (2016). However, Cronkleton, (2021) believes that these behaviours can stem from complex conditions with the brain.

Practitioners have knowledge and understanding through their training of children's self-control, attention and listening time and where they need to take their learning, nevertheless, they also need to have knowledge and understanding of the condition, to recognise the symptoms, not to diagnose, as this is the role of the specialists (Bhandari, 2023 and Riley Children's Health, 2017).

For a diagnosis of ADHD is a lengthy and timely process, a person's General Practitioner, known as GP is unable to diagnose, however, settings are now able to make referrals to the local authority. If a practitioner in a setting has concerns about a child showing symptoms of ADHD, then they would refer to the settings Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator, known as ALNCo. The child must be displaying 6 or more of the symptoms for any 1 of the 3 different forms of ADHD, they also have to be visible in more than one setting and continuous for at least 6 months according to NHS, (2021b) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2022b). However, children who are absent from the setting regular or moving settings can affect their waiting time on a diagnosis or even support, which can result to regression of development, behaviours, and self-worth according to Fawley-King et al. (2017).

Medical barrier

According to the NHS, (2021c) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, (2022c) and Rosen, (n.d.) there are many types of medicines that can be prescribed to children to alleviate their symptoms in order for them to progress with areas of development that have been barriers for them.

Stimulant medication or non-stimulant medication.

Medication can improve the higher order function of the brain, the self-control, retaining focus and able to follow direction, thus allowing the child to acquire new skills, like social skills and start to build relationships with their peers (CHADD, n.d.). However, both types of medication can cause side effects of headaches and stomach pains, thus affecting the child's health and well-being, communication between setting, parents and consultant would need to be rigorous as medication may need to be adapted or changed and strategies being used may need adjusting states Baweja, Mattison, and Waxmonsky, (2015). However, the center for disease control and prevention urges therapy classes for parent / carer and children before considering medication.

Social Barrier

Schreier, 2020 suggests that children with ADHD can find it hard to build relationships with their peers, they can find it difficult to judge social situations, lose in a game or even wait to take turns. This can be due to the executive functioning of the brain, Gill and Hosker, (2021) explain other children could then fear the child's reaction or get annoyed if they weren't following the rules, making it challenging for the children to interact and enjoy. Mikami and Normand, (2015) state that peer relationships are bidirectional, they work with putting a similar amount of effort into the relationship, giving, and receiving from each other, However a child with ADHD can not always do this. Depending on the form of ADHD the child has, will depend on the impact on their social skills. On the other hand, regardless of the form of ADHD, the isolation from their peers still heavily outweighs the acceptance agrees Gill and Hosker, (2021), children then can defer from social situations as the fear of rejections from other children.

Strategy

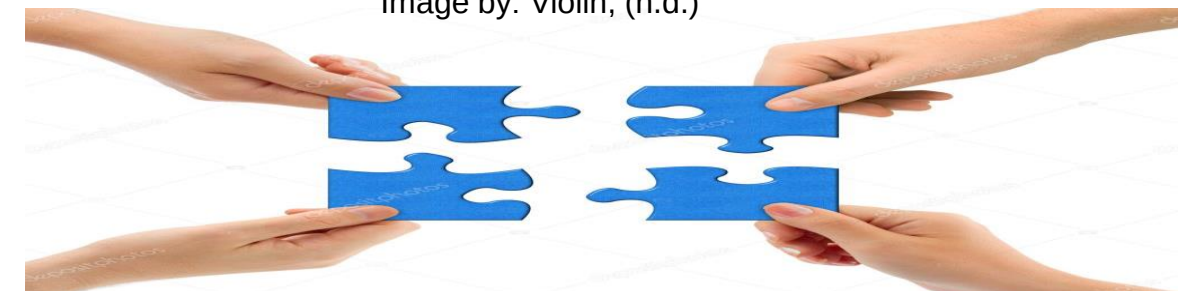
Children's severity of ADHD can vary and by assigning a teaching assistant to support a child can help to alleviate the pressure from the teacher, for example to maintain structure and give clear guidance can make a child with ADHD feel safe and secure, the teaching assistant can go through the day with the child, explaining the routine, what is expected of them and discuss how the goals can be met. This can help them organise their thoughts according to Shire Pharmaceuticals Limited, (2018). Hodgson, (2020) supports this adding, that communication between parents, setting, and other agencies is essential for consistency especially for very challenging behaviours. However, there may be cultural differences, where the family believe that they do not need to have any involvement in their child's education, and communication can be challenging but transparency from the start and good communication from the setting can avoid any miscommunication, also sharing an equal amount of positive and not so positive news according to Parentpay, (2022) and Tutt, (2021).

A study by Greenway, and Rees Edwards, (2020), revealed that teaching assistants had better knowledge and understanding of ADHD symptoms than qualified teachers, this could be since teaching assistants are predominantly employed to assist children with learning difficulties. However, their knowledge and understanding was only at an adequate level.

Conclusion

From the finding, there are a wide range of symptoms and a lengthy diagnosis period, however, to balance this out there are many ways to support children with ADHD, it is about finding the right strategy, medication, or therapy which best suits the individual's needs. Practitioners need further and continuous training, and more support in order to best assist the individual.

Image by: Violin, (n.d.)



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