Academic performances in ADHD children, results from a survey initiated by the association of patients HyperSupers - TDAH France

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Introduction

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a highly prevalent neurodevelopmental disorder which concerns 3.5 to 5.6%(1) of school-age children in France. ADHD is a disorder which is known to negatively impact academic performances in school-aged children by the mean of the cognitive impairment resulting from a deficit in attention and an alteration in executive functions. This survey was initiated by the French association HyperSupers - TDAH France in order to obtained data on care and their impact on academic success.

Objectives

The aim of the study was to describe a population of children suffering from ADHD and to clearly identify which actions could be individualized, that could positively impact on academic achievement.

Method

This study was based on the results of questionnaires fulfilled by members of the association of patients, which focused on the diagnosis, treatment and schooling of the children. Between August 8, and September 5, 2011, members families were asked to respond to an internet questionnaire, knowing that they would remain anonymous as to the data. It was specifically stipulated that the survey only concerned school-age children who had been diagnosed as ADHD by a medical specialist.
1486 families received an invitation to participate in the study. 657 questionnaires were completed, among which 524 responses concerning children with a diagnosis between the ages of 6 and 18 were retained.

Results

Respondents

In 92% of cases, the questionnaire was completed by mothers.

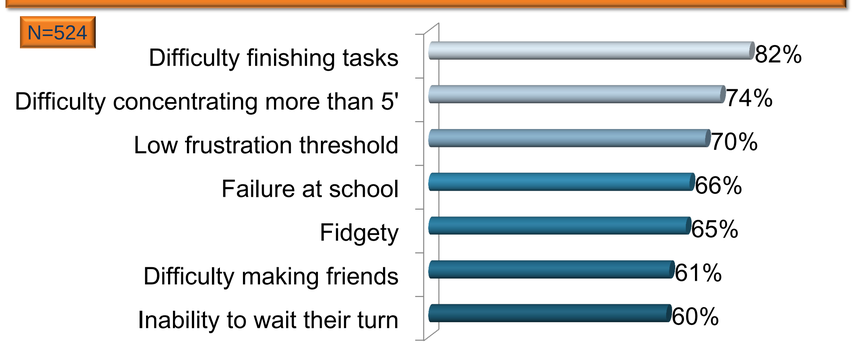
Age and gender

The mean age of the children was 12 years, with a ratio of 6 boys to 1 girl.

Children were diagnosed with ADHD at an average age of 9.3 years.

Problems

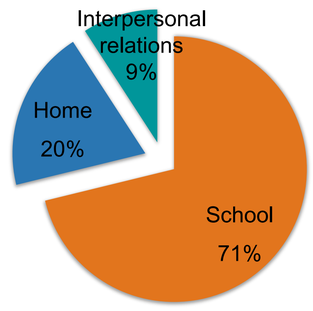
N=524



The difficulties leading to a search for professional help are symptomatic of ADHD.

Environment

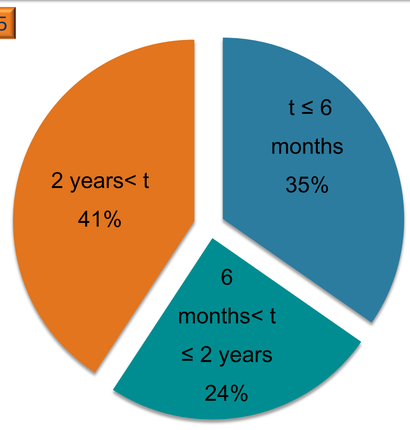
N=524



Problems are essentially present in the school environment.

Delay to diagnosis

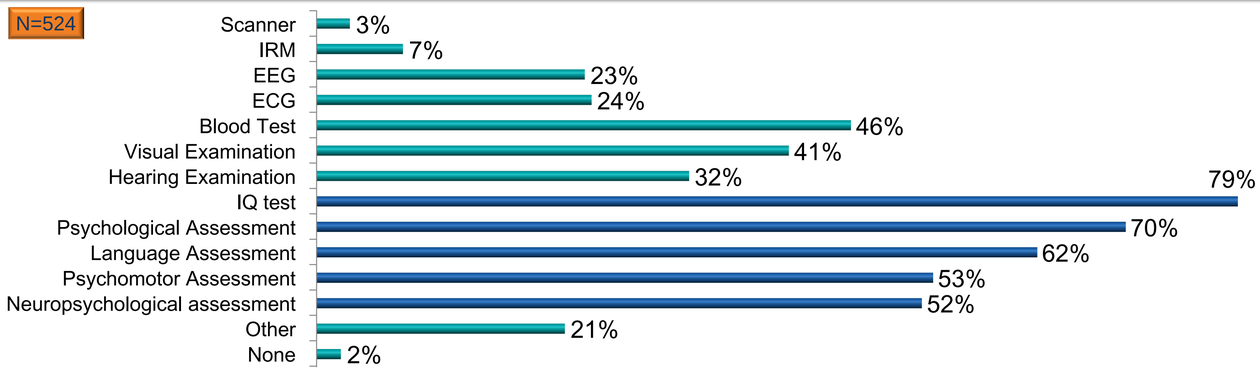
N=395



The delay to obtain a diagnosis was 30 months on average.

Different types of evaluation leading to diagnosis

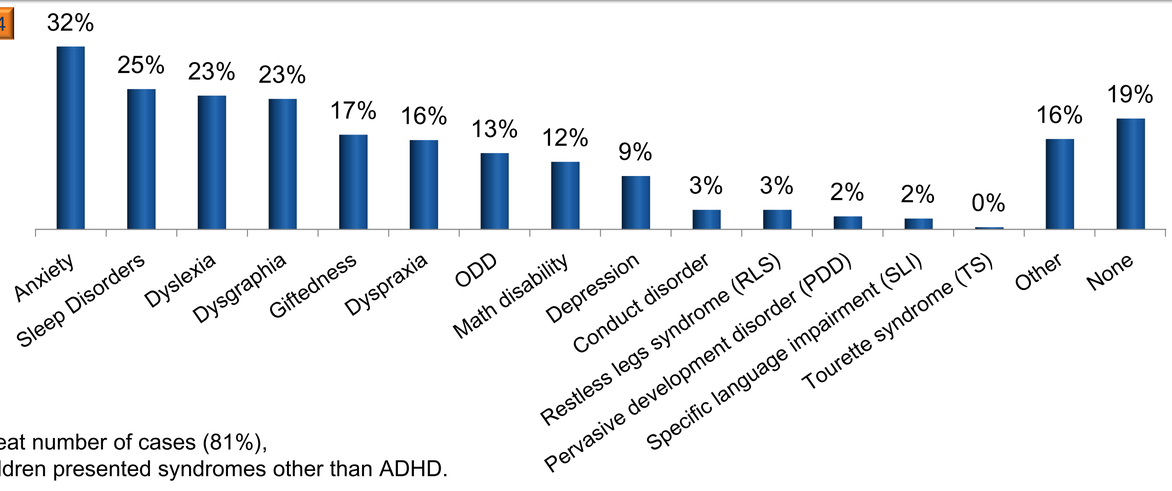
N=524



The children concerned by the survey were given the usual battery of psychological and biological tests to determine the source of their attention, learning and behavioral difficulties. In fact, only five of these test are pertinent to the diagnosis of ADHD.

Associated symptoms

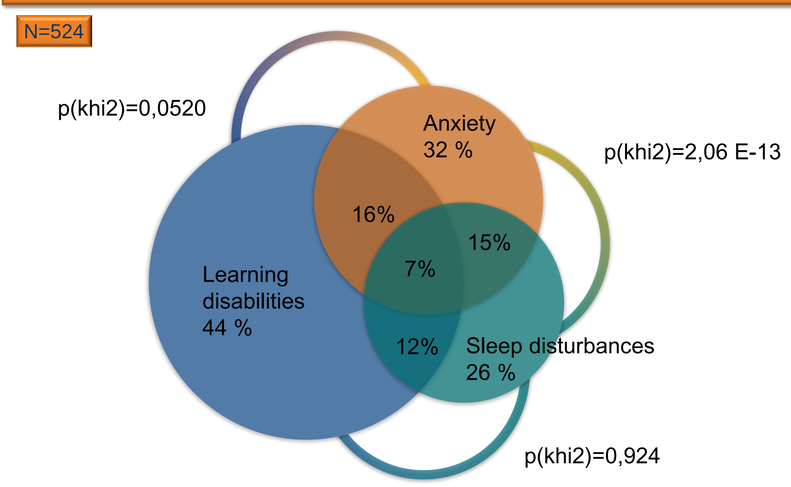
N=524



In a great number of cases (81%), the children presented syndromes other than ADHD.

Comorbidity

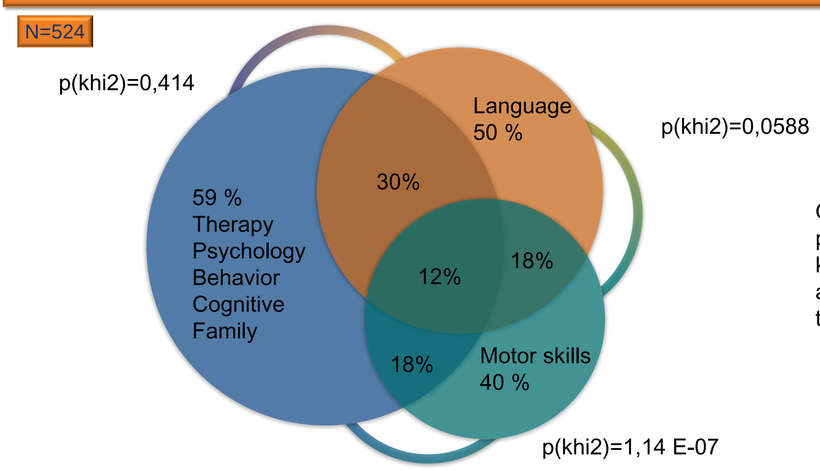
N=524



Impact of sleep disruption on comorbidities.

Non pharmacological treatments

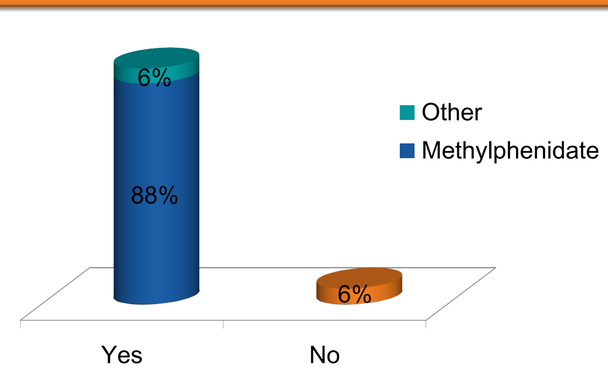
N=524



Overall, 59% of the children benefited from a psychotherapeutical approach. Various kinds of therapies were allowed. 72% were addressed for speech or motors skills therapy.

Medical treatments

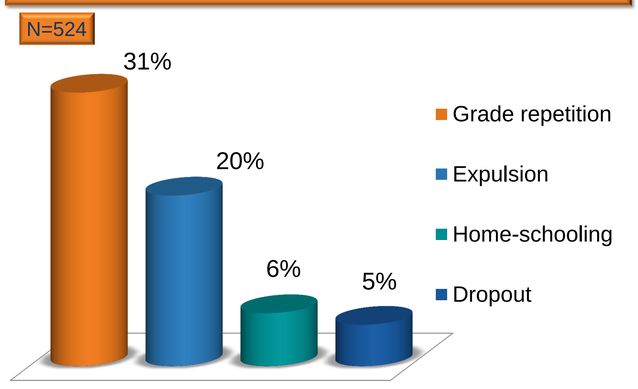
N=524



Methylphenidate is the only drug labeled in France for ADHD. 94% of the sample benefited from a medication. 88% received Methylphenidate at least once since the diagnosis was made. 6% only were treated with non specific agents.

School problems

N=524



The results show that academic success is very strongly affected by ADHD. Only 3.8% finish school.

Treatment

N=524

	Grade repetition	Expelled	Dropout without qualification
Speech-language therapy (50%)		6,5%**	
Psychomotor therapy (19%)			1,9%*
Methylphenidate (75%)	20,9%**	12,2%**	1,5%***

Among all, speech therapy and pharmacotherapy were the best predictors of academic performance.
P(Khi2) : * <0,05 ; **<0,005 ; ***<0,0001

Conclusion

Results of the survey confirm that parents of ADHD children focus intently on their children's schooling, which remains problematic with a high rate of grade repetition.

These children also have difficulty in their interpersonal relations which leads to their being expelled (20%) or dropping out.

The survey clearly brings out significant differences in academic achievement depending on whether children receive medication and/or therapy for their condition. Most importantly expulsion and dropout rates are reduced when the child benefits from speech and language and/or psychomotor therapy and when adjustments are made on the part of the school to take into account ADHD children's difficulties. Such help improves their performance and achievement in the school system. Methylphenidate often contributes strongly to improving academic achievement.

On the whole the survey shows that multimodal treatment offers the maximum benefits to ADHD children.

References

(1) Lecendreux M, Konofal E, Faraone S. Prevalence of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Associated Features among Children in France. *Journal Of Attention Disorders*. August 1, 2011;15(6):516-524.

Poster financed by TDAH France

HyperSupers - TDAH France is an association of patients, was founded in 2002 and represents over 3000 families who are affected by ADHD. Its actions take place in all areas concerned by ADHD. Sixty volunteers all around the country act in order to support patients with ADHD.