Autism and ADHD: A Clinician’s Perspective

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Objectives

• Define ADHD vs complex ADHD
• List current clinical criteria for ADHD diagnosis
• Describe clinical evaluation process for possible ADHD in autistic children
• Describe treatment of ADHD in children with autism
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Hyperactive Impulsive Type  Combined Type  Inattentive Type

*Complex ADHD

Autism & ADHD

**Diagnosis**
- Overlapping characteristics
- Developmental context
- Lack of validated tools

**Treatment**
- Lower response rates to medications
- More likely to experience side effects
ADHD Inattentive Criteria

- Difficulty focusing on details
- Difficulty paying attention
- Difficulty listening when spoken to directly
- Difficulty following through on instructions/tasks
- Difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Difficulty with losing/misplacing things
- Easily distracted by other stimuli (including thoughts)
- Forgetful in daily activities
ADHD Hyperactive-Impulsive Criteria

- Often fidgets or squirms
- Difficulty staying seated
- Often runs or climbs inappropriately/feeling restless
- Difficulty participating in quiet activities
- Often “on the go”
- Difficulty with interrupting or waiting for a turn
- Responds before questions are completed
Diagnostic Process

- Clinical interview and medical exam
- Caregiver and teacher rating forms
- Developmental and/or psychological assessments
Intervention/Supports

- Psychoeducation
- Psychosocial interventions
- Medical interventions
Psychosocial interventions

- Parent/caregiver training
- Classroom interventions
- Organizational skills training
• **Medication form:** liquid, chewable, tablets, dissolving tablets, capsules, patches

• **Length of effect:** short acting (immediate release) vs. long acting (extended or sustained release)
Stimulants

- Methylphenidates
- Amphetamines

Non-stimulants

- Norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors
- Alpha 2 Agonists
Medication Management

- Identify goals
- Plan for monitoring
- One change at a time
- Be patient
- Consider other factors

Work with provider to weigh pros and cons
Resources

ADHD information
https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/index.html

Behavioral interventions
https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/behavior-therapy.html

AACAP parent medication resource guide
https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Family_Resources/Parents_Medication_Guides.aspx

CHADD: Children and Adults with ADHD
https://chadd.org/
Questions?