

# Preschoolers, Risk Factors, and School-Based Treatments

**O**UR UNDERSTANDING of the causes, consequences, and most effective treatments for ADHD depends on high-quality research. But often this groundbreaking work doesn't reach the people who matter most: the families and individuals affected by ADHD. This column will highlight the need for improvements in the translation of behavioral treatments for preschoolers into practice, risk factors for ADHD, and promising new school-based treatments for young teens with ADHD.

## PRESCHOOLERS AND BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT

### What treatments are preschoolers with ADHD receiving?

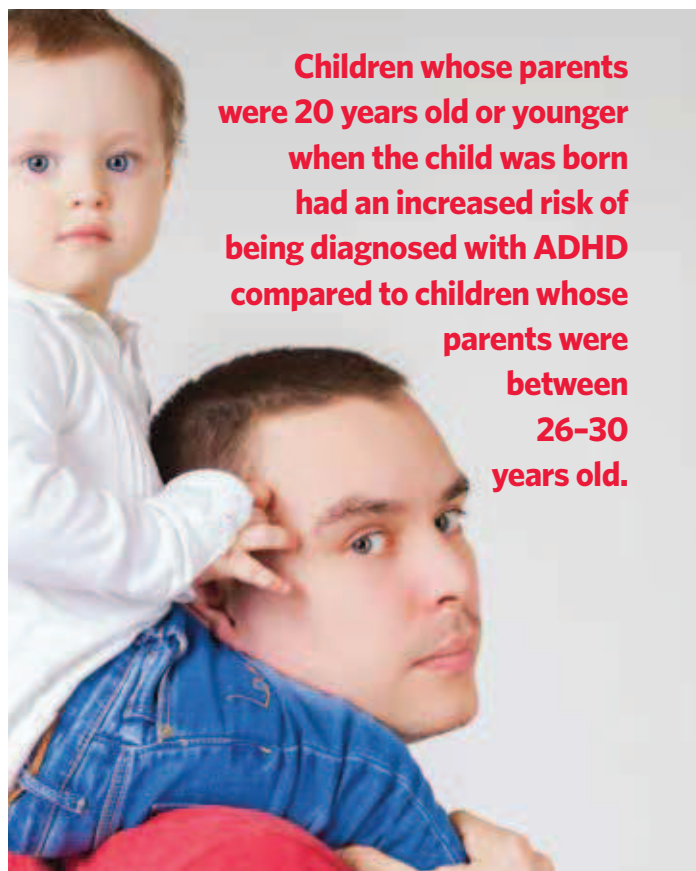
This study, published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, looked at whether the recommended treatment practices for preschoolers with ADHD are being followed. The American Academy of Pediatrics has long recommended that preschoolers with ADHD receive behavioral interventions before medication is prescribed. But this new study found that, contrary to these recommendations, just over 50 percent of preschoolers with ADHD were receiving psychological services (which includes behavioral treatment) versus almost 75 percent who were receiving medication. These findings highlight the need to train more providers in the implementation of behavioral treatments for preschoolers with ADHD.

Visser, S.N., Danielson, M.L., Wolraich, M.L., Fox, M.H., Grosse, S.D., Valle, L.A., Peacock, G. (2016). Vital Signs: National and state-specific patterns of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder treatment among insured children aged 2-5 years—United States, 2008-2014. *MMWR Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report*, 65, 443-450.

## PARENTAL AGE AND ADHD

### Does the parents' age affect a child's risk for ADHD?

In this study, the authors were interested in determining whether the age at which parents have children has an impact on the risk for having a child diagnosed with ADHD. The study used a very large population-based sample from Denmark to address this question, which included over 900,000 individuals. Children whose parents were 20 years old or younger when the child was born had an increased risk of being diagnosed with ADHD



**Children whose parents were 20 years old or younger when the child was born had an increased risk of being diagnosed with ADHD compared to children whose parents were between 26-30 years old.**

compared to children whose parents were between 26-30 years old. One possible reason for this is that young parents more often have histories of ADHD-related problems themselves and thus may have a genetic susceptibility to ADHD that gets passed on to their children. Ultimately, given this risk, greater parenting support resources should be provided to young parents.

Mikkelsen, S.H., Olsen, J., Bech, B.H., & Obel, C. (2016). Parental age and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). *International Journal of Epidemiology*, epub ahead of print.

## SCHOOL-BASED TREATMENTS FOR YOUNG TEENS

### Are school-based treatments for young teens with ADHD effective?

Individuals with ADHD often struggle with academic skills. This study tested whether a year-long middle school-based intervention would improve academic and classroom functioning, organizational and time-management skills, ADHD symptoms, and overall functioning. Students were randomly assigned into one of three groups: One group received the Challenging Horizons Program-After School program, one received the Challenging Horizons Program-Mentoring Version, and one group received regular treatment in the community. The Challenging Horizons program includes interventions fo-

cus on organizational and academic study skills as well as social functioning. The researchers found that students in the After School program benefited the most in terms of organization, time management, homework problems, academic functioning, and symptoms of inattention, with some of these improvements carrying over into the next academic year.

Evans, S.W., Langberg, J.M., Schultz, B.K., Vaughn, A., Altaye, M., Marshall, S.A., & Zoromski, A.K. (2016). Evaluation of a school-based treatment program for young adolescents with ADHD. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 84, 15-30. 📄

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— Dr. Mary Rooney, Clinical Psychologist specializing in ADHD

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