

Worldwide Incidence and Prevalence of ADHD

by Sam Goldstein, PhD

THIS COLUMN WILL REVIEW several studies examining the incidence and prevalence of ADHD worldwide. *Incidence* refers to the number of individuals in a specified population in whom the condition is being studied beginning within a specified time period, such as a year. *Prevalence* refers to the number of individuals in a specified population who have the condition being studied at a specific time, such as a particular day, regardless of when it began. This research adds to the global understanding of ADHD and the life course of individuals with ADHD in other countries.

► **Al-Sharbati M, Al-Adawi S, Ganguly S, Al-Lawatiya S, & Al-Mshefri F. (2008). Hyperactivity in a sample of Omani schoolboys. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 12(3), 264-269.**

A sample of over 1,500 Omani schoolboys from eight randomly selected schools representing the urban population of Oman were screened for hyperactivity and psychosocial and academic functioning. Nearly 8 percent of these boys demonstrated ADHD symptomatology, which was also strongly asso-



What Have We Learned?

- ADHD is recognized and identified worldwide as a lifespan disorder.
- Individual symptoms of ADHD occur frequently in the general population, and community studies of ADHD show similar and consistent results across countries.
- The large variation in ADHD prevalence reported among countries seems to be explained by methodological characteristics of studies, including diagnostic criteria, as well as by ethnic and cultural differences and other factors specific to the populations being studied.
- ADHD is commonly diagnosed in preschool- and school-age children worldwide and is similarly associated with poor school performance, behavior problems, comorbid disorders, and other negative outcomes.
- Adult ADHD is relatively common in workers worldwide and is significantly associated with work impairment and lost productivity, suggesting that targeted screening and treatment in the workplace could be cost-effective..

ciated with conduct disorder, poor school performance, and other behavior problems.

► **Farah LG, Fayyad JA, Eapen V, Cassir Y, Salamoun MM, Tabet CC, Mneimneh ZN, & Karam, EG. (2009). ADHD in the Arab world: A review of epidemiologic studies. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 13(3), 211-222.**

These researchers reviewed all epidemiological studies on ADHD conducted in Arab countries from 1966 through the present. Data on prevalence, gender differences, risk factors, comorbidity, and the burden of ADHD were analyzed. The authors concluded that the prevalence of ADHD in Arab populations is similar to that in other cultures, although more studies are needed due to the lack of research on psychiatric disorders.



► **de Graaf R, Kessler RC, Fayyad J, ten Have M, Alonso J, Angermeyer M, Borges G, Demyttenaere K, Gasquet I, de Girolamo G, Haro JM, Jin R, Karam EG, Ormel J, & Posada-Villa J. (2008). The prevalence and effects of adult attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) on the performance of workers: Results from the WHO World Mental Health Survey Initiative. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 65(12), 835-842.**

An ADHD screen was administered to respondents aged eighteen to forty-four in national household surveys in ten countries as part of the World Health Organization Mental Health Survey Initiative. An average of 3.5 percent of the 7,075 respondents reported symptoms meeting DSM-IV criteria for adult ADHD (response rates ranged from 45.9-87.7 percent across countries). ADHD was found to be less common among professionals than other workers and was significantly associated with impaired work performance. Only a small minority of workers had ever received treatment for ADHD; higher proportions reported treatment for comorbid mental/substance disorders.

► **Ruchkin V, Lorberg B, Kuposov R, Schwab-Stone M, & Sukhodolsky DG. (2008). ADHD symptoms and associated psychopathology in a community sample of adolescents from the European North of Russia. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 12(1), 54-63.**

Over five hundred adolescents were evaluated for ADHD symptoms based upon teacher ratings. Prevalence of individual ADHD symptoms ranged from 3.3 to 35 percent. Nearly 9 percent of males and 3.6 percent of females met diagnostic criteria for either the inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive subtype of ADHD. The authors concluded that ADHD prevalence rates suggested by this study are similar to rates in other countries.

► **Suvarna BS, & Kamath A. (2009). Prevalence of attention deficit disorder among preschool age children. *Nepal Medical College Journal*, 11(1), 1-4.**

To determine the prevalence of ADHD in preschool-age children, 1,250 (599 males and 651 females) children aged four to six years old from forty kindergartens in six localities in Mumbai, India, were screened for ADHD symptoms based on teacher and parent ratings. Parents of chil-

dren with significantly positive scores were interviewed by a psychiatrist, who then diagnosed ADHD based on DSM-IV criteria. Over 12.2 percent of preschoolers in the study were found to have ADHD, a prevalence rate consistent with studies in other countries. 📍

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