

Data Trends

From: Data Trends
Sent: Thursday, August 23, 2001 6:33 PM
To: Data Trends
Subject: Data Trends> News 021

Data Trends are produced by the Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, Tampa. Data Trends are funded by the Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. There are two Data Trends products: 1) Summaries, which detail recent, published articles on systems of care for children with emotional and behavioral disabilities and their families, and; 2) News briefs, which highlight related items or events of interest to the field.

This News Brief alerts you to a study conducted by Angold et al., "Stimulant treatment for children: A community perspective," published in the August, 2000, issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 39(8), pp. 975-983. Angold and colleagues analyzed data on 9- to 16-year olds from four annual waves of interviews with families participating in the Great Smoky Mountains longitudinal study. Three diagnostic groups were determined by parent-reports: 1) ADHD (children meeting DSM-III diagnostic criteria); 2) ADHD-NOS (children showing symptoms but not meeting DSM-III criteria), and; 3) children meeting neither ADHD nor ADHD-NOS criteria. Findings present a "troubling picture of a serious mismatch between the need for stimulant treatment and the provision of such treatment" (p. 983).

In four accompanying commentaries (pp. 984-994) Peter S. Jensen, M.D., Kelly J. Kelleher, M.D., M.P.H., Daniel J. Safer, M.D., and Benedetto Vitiello, M.D., acknowledge the importance of this study, and comment upon its implications for further research. Taken together, this series raises critical questions that are sure to drive further research in the areas of epidemiological research in general and stimulant treatment in particular. Some findings from the study include:

- Seventy-two percent of children reported by their parents to meet ADHD criteria received stimulant treatment; 22% of children in the ADHD-NOS diagnostic group received stimulant treatment, and; 5% of those with neither ADHD nor ADHD-NOS received stimulant treatment (p. 982).
- The majority of individuals who received stimulants were never reported by their parents to have any impairing ADHD symptoms, although they did have high levels of non-impairing parent-reported symptoms (p. 975).
- Most children received stimulant treatments for an average of three years (p. 983).
- American Indian children with ADHD-NOS received disproportionately high rates of stimulant treatment in comparison to other children with ADHD-NOS (p. 982).
- Among children who met full criteria for ADHD, boys and children were more likely to be prescribed stimulants than were girls and older children (p. 978).

Articles from the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* are available on-line to subscribing individuals or institutions at: <http://www.jaacap.com/>

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