

Eddy, L. D., Anastopoulos, A. D., King, K. A., Langberg, J. M. (2019, August). Measuring psychoeducational knowledge among college students diagnosed with ADHD. Poster to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Chicago.

Poster Abstract

Introduction. Evidence supporting the use of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in adults is mounting (Knouse, Teller, & Brooks, 2017). Although CBT for adults with ADHD commonly includes psychoeducation as a treatment component (e.g., Safren et al. 2010), preexisting levels of knowledge about ADHD and its impact on functioning are largely unexamined. The current study endeavors to better understand what college students with ADHD know about this disorder and examines associations between levels of ADHD knowledge and distress/interference with daily functioning. Reliability and concurrent validity of a measure developed to assess ADHD knowledge among college students are also assessed. **Subjects.** Participants included 280 undergraduate students with well-defined ADHD prior to participating in a randomized controlled trial assessing the efficacy of a CBT program designed to treat ADHD and associated impairments in college students. The majority of the sample was female (66%), and 33.7% of the sample identified as a racial or ethnic minority. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 30 (M age = 19.69; SD = 2.48). **Procedure.** Participants completed the Test of ADHD Knowledge (TOAK), a 40-item measure. Items consist of statements about assessment of ADHD, core characteristics, associated features, and common treatments. Respondents indicate whether they agree, disagree, or are “unsure” regarding the accuracy of statements. The TOAK is scored by summing the number of correct items. To assess concurrent validity, correlations between the TOAK and the ADHD Impact Module – Adult (AIM-A; HealthAct CHQ, 2007) were examined. In this study the AIM-A Symptoms Bother/Concern and the Symptoms Daily Interference scales were used to assess distress associated with ADHD symptoms as well as interference with daily functioning. **Results.** Internal consistency for the TOAK was acceptable (α = .84). Bivariate correlations indicated that TOAK scores were significantly and negatively associated with distress (r = -.170; p = .005) and functional impairment (r = -.141; p = .018). Further examination of items identified items answered correctly by a high percentage of participants (85% or more), as well as items answered correctly by a low percentage (25% or fewer). Results revealed most students correctly responded to questions about core symptoms, the diagnostic assessment process, and academic accommodations. Most students responded incorrectly to items regarding associations between ADHD and divorce, risky sexual behavior, and aggression. **Conclusions.** These results provide evidence for the reliability and concurrent validity of the TOAK. Significant negative correlations with two AIM-A subscales indicate as psychoeducational knowledge increases, distress and impairment associated with ADHD symptoms decreases. A thematic analysis suggests college students with ADHD are generally informed about core symptoms, diagnostic procedures, and potentially helpful academic accommodations. Students appear less knowledgeable about the impact of ADHD on relationships, risky sexual behavior, and aggression. Overall, findings indicate psychoeducation about ADHD may constitute an important treatment target. Increasing knowledge of ADHD may help this population successfully assume responsibility for their own treatment, as there is some evidence suggesting higher levels of knowledge are associated with greater use of academic support services (Gormley et al., 2018).