Mindful Continuing Education

Overdiagnosis of Mental Disorders in Children and Adolescents

Background

1. During the past 50 years, a worldwide increase in prevalence rates of mental disorders in children and adolescents was found in studies using numerous data sources, and studies using data from national registers of drug prescriptions found that prescription rates of psychoactive medication have increased.

A. True
B. False

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2. Which of the following is NOT one of the authors' explanations for the increase in diagnosis of mental disorders in children and adolescents?

A. Growing awareness of mental disorders and an accompanying reduction in stigmatization could lead to greater health care utilization
B. Improved diagnostic procedures may have led to better identification of mental disorders
C. Changes in diagnostic criteria lead to reduced thresholds for a diagnosis, particularly with for anxiety and conduct disorders, resulting in increases in prevalence rates following each published version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)
D. Diagnosticians may not strictly adhere to diagnostic criteria and as a result their clinical judgment is affected by heuristics and biases

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Factors That Might Cause Misdiagnoses in Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders-Information Gathering

3. Children and adolescents with externalizing disorders can show a so-called positive illusory bias (PIB) where they rate themselves as significantly more positive than their parents, teacher or other raters, and PIB has been associated with less effective social behavior and with:

A. Poor school performance
B. Less benefit from treatment
C. Increased behavior problems
D. Heightened anxiety

Influence of Factors Concerning Characteristics of the Child or Adolescent

4. In general, children who are depressed show similar symptoms as adult, especially in the way they express sadness as a primary symptom.

A. True
B. False

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5. When assessing overdiagnosis of ADHD in children, a large body of ADHD research points to the fact that children who are young compared to their classmates, are between 30 and 60% more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD and they receive psychostimulants twice as often as children born only a few days later.

A. True
B. False

Influence of Factors Concerning Diagnostic Criteria

6. One factor that may hinder a correct diagnosis of ADHD is the overlapping of symptoms that occur with ADHD and:

A. Oppositional defiant disorder
B. Anxiety disorders
C. Learning disabilities
D. Bipolar disorder

Influence of Factors Concerning the Health Systems

7. In many health care systems, a diagnosis is required in order to access and reimburse treatment, so children with unclear or borderline symptoms may be given a diagnosis so that further evaluation and treatment can be pursued.

A. True
B. False

Implications for Daily Practice and Further Research

8. The most important factor that leads to mistakes in diagnosing children and adolescents seems to be low interrater reliability for mental disorders in everyday clinical routine, due to heuristics and:

A. Insufficient application of diagnostic criteria
B. Cultural and social bias

C. Clinician’s comfort level and experience with various disorders
D. Lack of specialized diagnostic training

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