

# New study looking to detect and treat hoarding disorder in childhood

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Hoarding is a debilitating disorder that can have a devastating impact on those with the condition, their families and the community.

Deakin University psychology researchers are looking to better understand how this disorder develops in childhood, and its connection with [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#) (ADHD), in the hope of identifying markers to identify and treat the disorder early. The researchers are calling on parents with children aged 8—17 years to help with this nation-wide study.

Hoarding is a [mental disorder](#) whereby people have difficulty discarding items due to distress or urges to save items and cluttered living spaces resulting in significant distress and impairment. Of those diagnosed with hoarding disorder it is believed that 28 percent also have ADHD, much higher than the five percent rate in the general population.

Previous research has shown that hoarding begins in childhood but is frequently not noticed until adulthood. Therefore children with ADHD who go on to develop hoarding disorder may have symptoms that remain undiagnosed and not treated until adulthood. The Deakin study is aimed at revealing these early symptoms so that treatment can begin before the disorder becomes problematic.

"Having both hoarding disorder and ADHD has a detrimental impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of sufferers," explained Fiona Lynch, a Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) candidate with Deakin's School of

Psychology.

"They suffer with increased stress, reduced quality of life, increased employment and housing difficulties and severe medical issues such as higher risk of arthritis, diabetes and stroke.

"There are also impacts on the wider community who bear the responsibility for maintaining the health and safety of hoarders and carry the [economic burden](#) of the condition. For example, the Melbourne Fire Brigade reported that as many as 24 percent of all preventable fire deaths in Victoria (1999-2009) were due to hoarding in people over 50 years old.

"Having a way of detecting and treating hoarding in childhood will go a long way towards reducing the burden of the condition for sufferers and the community." The researchers are calling on parents of children aged 8—17 years, with or without ADHD, to take part in the study by completing a once-off set of mailed out questionnaires at their convenience. Children with ADHD can complete an additional optional one hour interactive session assessing executive functioning, such as memory, planning and inhibition, using a touchpad. Parents will receive a summary of their child's performance on these tasks.

**More information:** Parents who are interested in this study can contact Fiona Lynch at [flynch@deakin.edu.au](mailto:flynch@deakin.edu.au) or 0466 826 185 for more information.

Provided by Deakin University

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