

Wide treatment variances seen with ADHD drugs

August 10 2013



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(HealthDay)—There are wide variations in the use of stimulants to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder at both the state and the county level, according to research published online Aug. 2 in *Psychiatric Services*.

Douglas C. McDonald, Ph.D., and Sarah Kuck Jalbert, from Abt Associates in Cambridge, Mass., analyzed records of 24.1 million stimulant prescriptions dispensed to insured and [uninsured patients](#) obtained from approximately 76 percent of U.S. [retail pharmacies](#). To estimate treatment prevalence on March 15, 2008, data were weighted for all U.S. states and counties.

The researchers found that approximately 2.5 percent of children <17 years of age (3.5 percent of males and 1.5 percent of females) and 6 percent of persons >17 years of age were being treated with [stimulants](#) in March 2008. There was wide variance in treatment prevalence among states, and the variation among counties was even wider. Supply of physicians, socioeconomic composition of the population, and, among children, funding for special education explained two-thirds of the variation among counties in treatment prevalence. There was a high correlation between county prevalence rates of any stimulant use and rates of treatment among children and adults.

"Wide variations in treatment prevalence signal disparities between established clinical practice guidelines and actual practice, especially for primary care, where most patients prescribed stimulants are managed," the authors write.

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Citation: Wide treatment variances seen with ADHD drugs (2013, August 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-08-wide-treatment-variances-adhd-drugs.html>

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