

Doctors in Germany prescribing more psychotropic drugs for children and adolescents

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Pills. Credit: Public Domain

More prescriptions for psychotropic drugs in children and adolescents in Germany have been issued than in the past. This is the result of a study reported by Sascha Abbas and colleagues in the current issue of *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*.

On the basis of nationwide statutory health insurance data, the authors analyzed prescribing rates and rates of new prescriptions, as well as the groups of doctors who issued the initial prescriptions for [psychotropic drugs](#) in 5 million children and [adolescents](#). Herbal or homeopathic medicines were not included. The prevalence of psychotropic drug use rose from 19.6 per 1000 children and adolescents in 2004 to 27.1/1000 in 2012. Notable increases were seen for stimulants (10.5/1000 to 19.1/1000) and [antipsychotic drugs](#) (2.3/1000 to 3.1/1000), whereas prescribing rates for antidepressants remained stable. The number of patients who were prescribed such medications for the first time was mostly constant, or even fell, in 2006–2012.

The analysis of the data showed that the increase in prescriptions of psychotropic drugs is not based on an increase in the numbers of children and adolescents entering therapy for the first time, but on the fact that more patients who had already undergone therapy previously were prescribed [medication treatment](#) again in subsequent years.

More information: Abbas S, Ihle P, Adler JB, Engel S, Günster C, Linder R, Lehmkuhl G, Schubert I: Psychopharmacological prescriptions in children and adolescents in Germany—a nationwide analysis of over 4 million statutorily insured individuals from 2004 to

2012. *Dtsch Arztebl Int* 2016; 113: 396–403.

www.aerzteblatt.de/pdf.asp?id=179582

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