Research shows ADHD goes beyond core symptoms and needs a holistic approach

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New research has revealed the extensive impact of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) highlighting mental health vulnerabilities, physical health risks, and societal implications, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to properly manage this condition.

A comprehensive review by experts at the University of Nottingham's School of Psychology and Institute of Mental Health in collaboration with Nottingham Trent University analyzed more than 125 reviews. The results highlight a spectrum of health and lifestyle risks associated with ADHD.

The review, published in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, serves as a pivotal step toward enhancing the understanding and management of ADHD, paving the way for more targeted interventions and improved outcomes for individuals living with the disorder.

The study identifies a range of mental health vulnerabilities associated with ADHD, including addiction, suicide, eating disorders, mood disorders, and personality disorders, underscoring the importance of tailored interventions for individuals with the condition.

The review also highlights significant physical health risks linked to ADHD, such as obesity, sleep disorders, oral hygiene issues, injuries, and somatic diseases, emphasizing the necessity of integrated care models.
The three key symptoms of ADHD include hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention and it impacts around 5% of the UK population and affects one child in every classroom and 3% of adults, impacting all aspects of life, home, education, work, relationships and health. People with ADHD are 60% more likely to divorce, 30% higher risk of suicide or 35% higher chance of having accidents.

Beyond individual health, the study explores societal implications, revealing impacts on offending behavior, criminality, violence, employment challenges, educational attainment, quality of life, relationships, and risk-taking behaviors.

Dr. Blandine French is an ADHD lived-experience researcher in the School of Psychology and Institute for Mental Health at the University of Nottingham and led the study. Blandine previously worked in the hospitality industry as a restaurant manager for 13 years. But after receiving her own ADHD diagnosis as an adult, she gained a deeper understanding of her learning styles and need to study differently, allowing her to go to university.

"The holistic perspective presented in the review underscores the necessity of a paradigm shift in the approach to ADHD. Moving beyond a narrow focus on symptom management, there is a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive care models that encompass mental health, physical health, and societal factors.

"Integration of this comprehensive understanding into ADHD discourse is deemed crucial for developing targeted interventions and providing care.

"By adopting a holistic approach, stakeholders such as clinicians, teachers or parents can better address the diverse challenges posed by ADHD and enhance the overall well-being of individuals affected by the
condition," says Dr. French.

NHS England has recently set up a task force to look at the service provision and its impact on people with ADHD. The aim of the task force is to develop a joined-up approach to care encompassing education, care, health and criminal justice sectors.

Dr. French adds, "The development of this task force is a positive step forwards in developing a better approach to care for people with ADHD. We hope our research can help to inform some of this work and that services for people with ADHD can be improved. For example, communication from health care professionals on the physical risks could help families seek earlier support for these less known related issues."

"The range and severity of problems experienced by individuals with ADHD requires ADHD assessment and treatment to become more of a priority," says Professor David Daley, head of Applied Psychological Practice at Nottingham Trent University, co-author of the paper.


Provided by University of Nottingham

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