

The changing epidemiology of methyl phenidate prescriptions in the community: a multifactorial model

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Objective: To characterize the use of methylphenidate (MPH) in the treatment of ADHD in the pediatric age group.

Methods: The details of all prescriptions for MPH filled for children of 6-18 years old during 2011, in both the Sharon-Shomron and Dan-Petah Tiqva regions, were drawn from the data base of the Clalit Health Services.

Results: The 119,913 children of the Sharon-Shomron region were surveyed. Of these, 9,025 received prescriptions for MPH, at an overall one year prevalence rate of 7.52%, with 10.8% in Jewish children and 2.54% in Arab children, representing a four-fold difference. Overall prevalence for the year 2007, by comparison, was 3.9%, 6% among Jewish children and 0.06% among Arab youngsters. Males represented 10% of the group cohort, whereas girls, 4%, a 2.5 fold gender difference in prescription rates. Of the 21,811 children surveyed in the Dan-Petah Tiqva region 1,325 were prescribed MPH, at an overall prevalence rate of 6%, with 6/9% among Jewish children and 2% in the Arab sector, a 3.5 fold difference.

Conclusions: Both the diagnosis and the decision to treat ADHD with MPH follows both clinical indications, as well as SES and cultural norms. The study emphasizes glaring differences according to gender and ethnic affiliation.