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Nottingham

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Policy brief: September 2023

ADHD: Do you know enough?

The importance of ADHD training for healthcare professionals



Summary

We know that better access to training for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) will improve access to care and wellbeing of many children and adults in the UK. Yet ADHD training is sparse and not part of the compulsory curriculum for many healthcare professionals. This project looked at how co-developing an ADHD training program with healthcare professionals could improve ADHD knowledge, reduce stigmas and facilitate access to care. Without adequate training, many individuals are missed and suffer unnecessarily, creating more individual, societal and economic costs and inequalities.



Contact us: BlandineFrench@nottingham.ac.uk www.ndlab.org.uk

Introduction

ADHD affects around 5% of the UK population.

Undiagnosed ADHD carries many risks to children and adults such as lower school achievement, increased mental health difficulties etc. Early diagnosis and treatment can transform outcomes, so it is important that all healthcare professionals are trained in recognising this common condition.

- GPs act as gatekeepers in the ADHD care pathway and need to be able to identify ADHD in their practice
- By increasing ADHD knowledge, more people can access care
- Co-developing online training with healthcare professionals will ensure the validity of this training

Recommendations

- ADHD training should be compulsory for all healthcare professionals.
- GPs most specifically need training as they act as gatekeepers to ADHD services
- A short 45-minute online training implemented in practices can greatly improve access to care
- Increasing access to care will prevent many adverse events for patients, improve wellbeing, and reduce costs and inequalities



Methodology

We carried out a number of studies to evaluate how best to train healthcare professionals on ADHD. Focusing on GPs, we conducted in-depth interviews with service users and healthcare professionals. These groups also continually fed back and reviewed the different stages of the training development in a co-production approach. By gaining insight into the experiences of these groups, we ensured that the training was tailored to their needs in order to improve practice.

The final online training was developed and evaluated with over 200 GPs.

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I was surprised how little I knew about it before hand to be honest... it's completely changed the way I view them (patients with ADHD), I am much more sympathetic.”

—GP testimony

Results and conclusions

The training proved that a short 45-minute online course can significantly:

- Reduce misconceptions
- Improve practice

These results were maintained over time.

Our results showed that:

Millions of adults and children with ADHD are currently undiagnosed

98% of GPs improved their knowledge and confidence after taking part in the training.

77% of GPs have received little or **no training** on ADHD.

95% of GPs would **recommend** this training

By improving ADHD knowledge in healthcare professionals, many more patients can access care and live **better lives**

Implications and recommendations

This project highlighted the lack of ADHD training in healthcare professionals, with this important topic not being part of compulsory medical training. Undiagnosed ADHD can have life-long adverse events for service users and it is important to ensure early identification. By co-developing tailored training with healthcare professionals, this project ensured that the proposed online training was adequate for GPs. The format included content that they could engage in, and that would also

improve practice and directly improve service users' outcomes.

GPs and other healthcare professionals play a key role in care pathways, so ADHD training in the medical profession is of utmost importance. This online training has proven that a short, free intervention can greatly improve access to care, and should be implemented to all healthcare professionals to allow a diagnosis as early as possible.

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Actually it has changed my attitude - it's not very often that some sort of learning will do that because attitudes are quite hard-engrained. I found it very useful. I'm more open-minded to it as a diagnosis and it will help me pick up ADHD faster.”

—GP testimony

References

ADHD training: www.adhdinfo.org.uk

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Contact:

Dr Blandine French

Blandine-French@nottingham.ac.uk

www.ndlab.org.uk