

ADHD: It's Not Just For Boys Anymore

Patricia O. Quinn, M.D.
Director, National Center for
Gender Issues and ADHD

ADHD Survey

- National survey examining current perceptions regarding gender differences in ADHD
- Fielded with various audiences April 2002
 - Children with ADHD (346 children/teens age 12 - 17)
 - Parents of children with ADHD (541)
 - Teachers grades K - 12 (500)
 - General public (1,797 adults age 18 and above)

Prevalence and Diagnosis

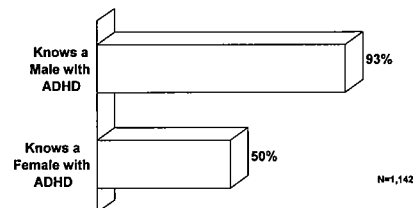
Is ADHD More Prevalent In Boys Than In Girls?

- 58% of the general public and 82% of teachers say YES ...
- Research says:
 - Prevalence rates are unclear
 - Ratios in the general population have been estimated at 2:1 or 3:1
 - Rates in clinics that work with adults show that prevalence is approximately equal

SURVEY SAYS:
Girls are diagnosed with ADHD later than boys because they are more likely to "suffer silently"

THE FACTS:
Girls, minorities and patients with the primarily inattentive sub-type of ADHD are often overlooked. In girls, as many as 75% of cases may be missed

Half Of The Public Does Not Know A Female With ADHD, Whereas Only A Small Minority Do Not Know A Male With ADHD

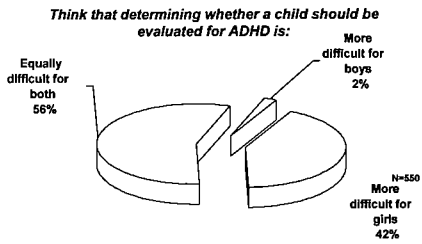


BASE: From someone with ADHD
Q113Q42 (Public) How many of these people with ADHD/ADHD are male/female?

What Prevents Diagnosis?

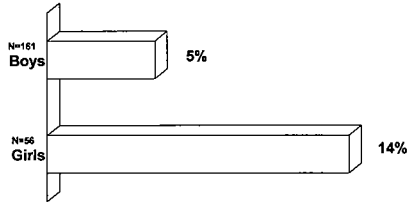
- Dependent upon others for referral
- Inattentive type overlooked by parents, teachers and clinicians
 - Girls more teacher compliant
 - Often good academic records in early years
- Studies show inattentive type harder to recognize; because it wasn't seen doesn't mean it wasn't there!
 - Hyperactivity/impulsivity less common

Four Out Of Ten Teachers Report Having More Difficulty Recognizing ADHD Symptoms In Girls



BASE: All Qualified Respondents
CASE (Teachers) For whom it is more difficult to determine whether or not they should be referred to a medical professional for and evaluation for ADHD/ADOT

Girls Are More Likely To Say They Took Medication For Depression Before Taking Medication For ADHD



BASE: Takes medicine to treat ADHD
Q1515 (Children) Did you take medicine for any of the following conditions before you started taking ADHD/ADOT medicine?

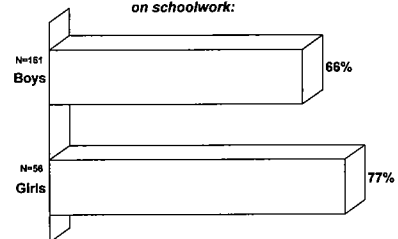
The Lost Girls

- Often misdiagnosed as having depression or bi-polar disorder
- May be at greater risk for:
 - Smoking in adolescence
 - Teen pregnancy/STDs
 - Driving offenses and traffic accidents
 - Substance abuse

Impact of ADHD

Girls Were More Likely Than Boys To Feel That It Was "Very Difficult" To Focus On Schoolwork

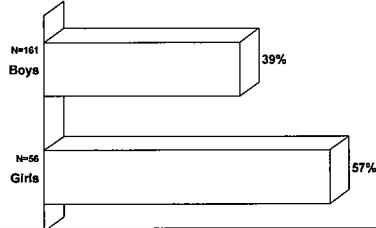
Before taking medication for ADHD, was "very difficult" to focus on schoolwork:



BASE: Takes medicine for ADHD
Q1630 (Children) Before you were taking medicine for ADHD/ADOT, how difficult was it for you to...? Focus on schoolwork

Girls Were More Likely Than Boys To Feel That It Was "Very Difficult" To Get Things Done In General

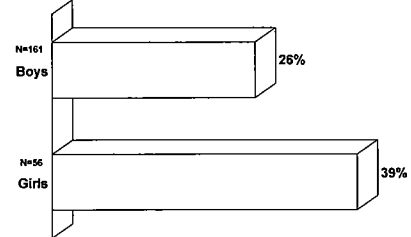
Before taking medication for ADHD, was "very difficult" to get things done in general:



BASE: Takes medicine for ADHD
Q1520 (Children): Before you were taking medicine for ADHD/ADD, how difficult was it for you to... 1 Get things done in general

Girls Were More Likely Than Boys To Feel That It Was "Very Difficult" To Get Along With Parents

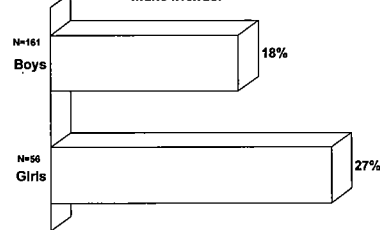
Before taking medication for ADHD, was "very difficult" to get along with parents:



BASE: Takes medicine for ADHD
Q1520 (Children): Before you were taking medicine for ADHD/ADD, how difficult was it for you to... 1 Get along with your parents

Girls Were More Likely Than Boys To Feel That It Was "Very Difficult" To Make Friends

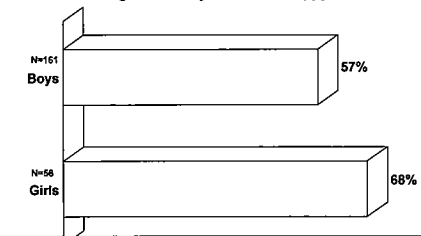
Before taking medication for ADHD, was "very difficult" to make friends:



BASE: Takes medicine for ADHD
Q1520 (Children): Before you were taking medicine for ADHD/ADD, how difficult was it for you to... 1 Make friends

Girls Were More Likely Than Boys To Feel That It Was At Least "Somewhat Difficult" To Feel Good About Themselves And Feel Happy

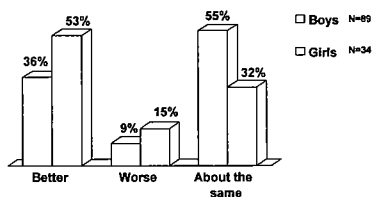
Before taking medication for ADHD, was very/somewhat difficult to feel good about yourself/feel happy:



BASE: Takes medicine for ADHD
Q1520 (Children): Before you were taking medicine for ADHD/ADD, how difficult was it for you to... 1 Feel good about yourself/feel happy

More Than Half Of Girls Who Felt Something Was "Wrong" Felt Better After Learning They Had ADHD

After learning name for what they were feeling, felt:



BASE: Felt like there was something wrong
Q1425 (Children): When you finally learned the name for what you were feeling... ADHD/ADD... did you feel... 1

Research: Accepting Girls With ADHD

- Mothers of girls with ADHD tend to be more critical than mothers of boys with ADHD
- Harder to accept and understand forgetfulness, disorganization, withdrawal, messiness in girls
- Gender roles allow boys with these characteristics to be accepted

Teachers Unaware of Extent of Impact on Girls

What Teachers Think About ADHD Impact And Gender

- Three out of ten teachers think boys are more likely to have difficulty getting along with other children; 65% think the likelihood is equal for boys and girls
- Most do not realize that girls with ADHD are more likely to have difficulty with social relationships
- Overall, teachers think boys and girls have equal difficulty with school and family life

What Teachers Think About ADHD Impact And Gender

- Among teachers grades 8 and above, more have observed promiscuous behavior in girls with ADHD (44%) than boys with ADHD (28%)
- More than half (56%) think girls are more likely to be embarrassed about having ADHD
- 27% think there is an increased stigma attached to girls with ADHD compared to boys

Teachers' Perceptions Match What Girls Actually Report In One Area; Half Think Girls With ADHD Act Depressed More Than Boys With ADHD



BASE: All Qualified Respondents
Q45 (Teachers) Who is more likely to act depressed

ADHD Treatment

Medication Issues

- Emotional lability and reactivity seem addressed with long-acting stimulants
- Anxiety and depression may need to be treated
- Choice of stimulant may be dictated by coexisting conditions

Girls' Parents More Willing To Seek Treatment

- Almost all (92%) were "very willing" to seek a medical opinion, vs. 73% of boys' parents
- Among parents of boys who are taking medication, more than half (59%) were initially reluctant, compared to 39% of girls' parents

Treatment Issues

- Don't need as much "behavior management"
- Mother/daughter issues
- Peer issues more intense
- Stronger need to work on social skills
- Self-esteem and shame need to be addressed

Women with ADHD

History Is Reversed!

- Adult to child, rather than child to adult
- Self-referral and treatment of women has helped us to better recognize girls with ADHD

Diagnostic Issues For Women

- Depression and/or anxiety often present
- Early childhood criteria need to be questioned
 - Often no report of early childhood issues
 - Pattern of increase in symptoms at puberty
- Hyperactivity may manifest as:
 - Hyper-reactivity, emotional roller coaster
 - Hyper-talkativeness
 - Tom-boy behavior in girlhood

Presenting Complaints

- Feel overwhelmed by everyday activities
- Chronically disorganized
- Chronically late, poor time management
- Sense of shame, inadequacy – Can't live up to typical societal expectations
- Household management feels impossible
- Meal-planning and preparation a challenge

Mitigating Circumstances

*Especially Important In Understanding
And Diagnosing Women And Girls*

- Fewer ADHD symptoms
- Structured environment
- High SES
- No ODD or CD
- High IQ
- Social pressure/need for approval

Survey Findings Support Themes In Gender Study Research

- More girls fall into inattentive category
 - Less hyperactive, less externalizing behaviors
- Differences in impairments and co-morbidities as compared to boys
 - Girls more likely to have difficulty with social and familial relationships, have low self-esteem and suffer from depression
- Girls feel better after diagnosis, once cause is known
- Girls referred for treatment more severe, not representative
- In women, learned helplessness, increased anxiety and depression, emotion-oriented coping, negative childhood memories

Misunderstood Disorder

- ADHD can have serious consequences, but it is treatable
- Safe and effective medications are available that can change people's lives
- Balanced and accurate information is needed to generate greater understanding
- More gender-based research is needed