

Alarming Rise in American Adults Taking Medications for ADHD



The number of young adults in the U.S. taking medications for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) nearly doubled from 2008 to 2012, according to *Express Scripts*, the nation's largest prescription drug manager, *The New York Times* reports.

In processing prescriptions for 90 million Americans, *Express Scripts* found that almost one in 10 adolescent boys were taking Rx medications for the disorder – usually prescription stimulants like Adderall, Ritalin or Concerta.

These prescribed medications help ameliorate common symptoms associated with ADHD, like severe inattention and hyperactivity, sleep deprivation, appetite suppression and, more rarely, hallucinations.

Some experts noted the new research report provides clear evidence that ADHD is being diagnosed and treated with medication in children far beyond reasonable rates, and that rapidly increasing diagnoses among adults might indicate similar problems.

In examining actual prescriptions filled, the report also strongly corroborated data from several government surveys that many mental health experts had discredited for relying on parents' own recollections of their children's health care.

"It's hard to dismiss the data in this report," said Brooke Molina, an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and one of the disorder's leading researchers. "There are limitations with every study, but it's hard to do anything here but conclude that we have a continually forward-marching increase."

A study released last year from The Partnership at Drugfree.org also found some concerning trends, with one in eight teens reporting they had taken Ritalin or Adderall when it was not prescribed for them and almost one-third of parents saying they believed Rx stimulants can improve a teen's academic performance, even if the young person does not have ADHD.