Hello and welcome to Psychosocial Intervention for ADHD in Adults: Guide for Primary Care Providers. My name is Dr. Russell Ramsay from the University of Pennsylvania.

Faculty Disclosure

Regarding financial conflict, I have no financial conflicts that will influence this presentation.

Learning Objectives

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- identify psychosocial treatments for adults diagnosed with ADHD
- make referral suggestions for appropriate psychosocial treatments for adults with ADHD based on their presenting complaints

- Commonly encountered questions

- "The medications are helping me but I'm still having problems. What else can I do?"
- "I've tried ADHD medications. Is there something else that can help me with my ADHD?"

What are psychosocial interventions for adult ADHD?

But first, what are psychosocial interventions for adult ADHD? Psychosocial interventions are non-medication treatments and related support services designed to reduce impairment and improve coping skills in adults with ADHD.

What are psychosocial interventions for adult ADHD?

• Psychosocial interventions include:
  - Psychoeducation
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Educational accommodations
  - Employment accommodations
  - Treatments for relationship difficulties (e.g., couples of family therapy)
  - Financial management

What are psychosocial interventions for adult ADHD?

• Ongoing coping difficulties despite an otherwise effective medication regimen
• Medical profile (e.g., cardiac) or adverse side effects obviates the use of medications
• Patient refuses medications despite adequate education that addresses concerns

When are psychosocial treatments appropriate for adults with ADHD?

The purpose of today's session is to talk about the various options you have for your patients and to guide them on how to get the help that can be most beneficial for them.

When are psychosocial treatments appropriate for adults with ADHD?

- Psychosocial treatments are helpful when patients have:
  - Residual ADHD symptoms and impairments
  - Educational difficulties
  - Occupational difficulties
  - Relationship difficulties
  - Financial difficulties
  - Co-existing psychiatric disorders (e.g., mood, anxiety, substance abuse)
  - Any major impairment in adult role functioning associated with inadequately treated ADHD

How can psychosocial treatments help my adult patients who have ADHD?

- Psychoeducation
  • Teach patient and family about ADHD
  • Overview nature, course of ADHD
  • Overview of treatment options and potential effects/side effects
  • Instill hope and optimism

Psychoeducation

Regardless of the psychosocial treatment the first thing to encourage patients to do is to get educated about adult ADHD. You or another provider can teach the patient and the family about ADHD. Provide an overview of what ADHD is, what the symptoms are, and how it is diagnosed. In
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (1)

- What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)?
  - Model of psychotherapy emphasizing the role of distorted information processing (i.e., distorted thoughts) on the development and maintenance of depression and anxiety.
  - Focus on the interplay of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions and their influence on current functioning.
  - Strong empirical support as a psychological treatment or adjunct for a variety of psychiatric disorders.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (2)

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has been modified to address adult ADHD:
  - Structured sessions and treatment goals
  - Segmentation
  - Instruction
  - Process orientation
  - Delivered in either group or individual format
  - Involves target functional impairments associated with ADHD as well as coexisting problems
  - Behavioral (e.g., reality-based and challenging behaviors
  - Cognitive (e.g., cognitive reification of dysfunctional thoughts)
  - Structural management (e.g., frustration, anger, anxiety, depression)

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (3)

- CBT approaches for adult ADHD target:
  - The development and maintenance of coping skills to address the areas of impairment associated with symptoms of ADHD (e.g., disorganization, time management, procrastination), thereby improving overall well-being.
  - Dysfunctional thought patterns that lead to excessive self-criticism, pessimism, or a maladaptive positive bias, all of which may interfere with motivation and follow through on the use of coping skills.
  - Co-existing problems that may further interfere with coping with ADHD, such as anxiety, depression, or substance use problems.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (4)

- CBT has strong empirical support. A number of published studies yielded positive results in several clinical outcome studies of the treatment of adults with ADHD (2). Treatment modalities include randomized control studies (3).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (5)

- Commonly encountered question:
  - "How is cognitive behavioral therapy going to help me? I know what I need to do but just cannot do it."

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (6)

- I know what I need to do but just cannot do it. The patients can be reminded that CBT is not just telling you to do the same thing over and over again. By working with a skilled therapist, adults with ADHD begin to understand why they have difficulties implementing various coping skills. Again, psychoeducation about ADHD helps adults develop an understanding of how to cope with day-to-day life.

Education Accommodations (1)

- College students with ADHD may be eligible for academic accommodations.
  - Requirements for documentation:
    - Recent psychosocial educational evaluation performed by qualified professional
    - Documented signs of significant impairment that interferes with learning in an otherwise qualified student

Education Accommodations (2)

- Some students who have ADHD may not require cognitive behavioral therapy though it has been found helpful with young adults with ADHD. College students with ADHD most likely are going to have education impairments. They are going to have difficulties in the college or graduate school setting or any other adult continuing education setting. One intervention that can be very helpful is academic accommodations. These are adjustments to the typical learning, classroom, or test-taking environment to help accommodate for the symptoms of ADHD. To get formal academic accommodations, there are specific requirements that must be met and it is important for you to inform your patients as to what these are. First, there needs to be a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation performed by a qualified professional using the standard diagnostic procedures for ADHD that are included in your Adult ADHD Toolkit. Also, a number of other tests may be necessary to help identify any specific learning impairments associated with ADHD. In terms of recommending specific academic accommodations, those accommodations have to be tied to the results of this evaluation. So it is more then just getting

Education Accommodation (3)

- A doctor’s note that some one has ADHD. A diagnosis of ADHD alone is not sufficient, but once that is established that there is ADHD and there are specific learning impairments, there are many accommodations that can be very helpful for students.

The most common is extended time in which to finish in-class examinations. They can also be taken in a distraction-reduced environment. Students with ADHD may be granted access to lecture materials before the class in order to prepare earlier. There are various technologies, such as assistive technologies that can also be helpful in the learning and studying process.

Education Accommodation (4)

- In addition to these in-class and academic accommodations, academic coaching or specialized learning support is emerging as a potentially very helpful psycho-social treatment for college students with ADHD. Learning support services at school can help ADHD students
develop and implement effective learning strategies: knowing how to organize a paper, knowing how to break down assigned reading, etc. These learning strategies can also focus on organization and time management strategies outside of academics that can affect academic performance, such as setting up a daily planner, organizing the study and recreational schedule for the week, and various other strategies including making adequate use of assistive technologies.

**Educational Accommodations (4)**

- There is promising pilot research that “academic coaching” is helpful for college students with ADHD.
- Common features of programs studied:
  - Identification of ADHD and coping skill deficits
  - Specialized support that targets
  - Individualized learning support related to current courses
  - Use of coping skills emphasizing implementation of study skills, organization, and time management strategies
  - Independent use of coping skills and positive alliance with coach suggested predictions of improvements.[4]

Also the consistent use of these coping skills. Finding is that independent use of coping skills and a positive alliance with the coach predict a positive outcome in academic coaching.

**Educational Accommodations (5)**

- Commonly encountered question:
  - “Should I disclose my diagnosis to my school?”

**Employment Accommodations (1)**

- Otherwise qualified workers with ADHD may be eligible for workplace accommodations if significant functional impairments affecting work performance can be documented.
- There are many “informal” accommodations and coping strategies that can be implemented without disclosure of the ADHD diagnosis.
- What else can I do?

Employment problems. After completing school many adults with ADHD figure that many of their struggles will be relieved by getting into a consistent work environment. However, research has shown that adults with ADHD continue to have significant coping difficulties in the workplace. It really affects virtually all areas of life. Now workers who are otherwise qualified for their job may qualify for similar accommodations as they did as students. However, it can be a little more difficult to disclose your disability in the workplace and people struggle with whether or not to disclose. So people might hold off seeking formal accommodations. However, there are many informal accommodations or coping strategies that workers can implement to improve their productivity. Very often patients will ask, “What else can I do?”

**Employment Accommodations (2)**

- “ADHD Coaching” is an emerging psychosocial support service that may be helpful in workplace functioning.[5]
- ADHD coaches focus on helping adults with ADHD to develop and implement coping skills that can be used to improve work efficiency.
- ADHD coaching is still defining itself as a field and there is one efficacy study with positive results for adults with ADHD.[6]

Employment Accommodations (2)

Well that’s where psychosocial treatment such as ADHD coaching can help. In addition to implementing coping skills on one’s own, having access to an ADHD coach, similar to an athletic coach, can be very helpful. Coaches provide reminders or work with the adult with ADHD to set up a plan for workplace challenges. There has only been one outcome study of ADHD coaching for adults that yielded positive results, but anecdotally it is a growing field and many people describe it as being helpful in terms of implementing, and most importantly, following through on the use of coping strategies.

**Employment Accommodations (3)**

- Specific employment accommodations that can be helpful for workers with ADHD, whether instituted formally or informally, include making good use of assistive technology like computer software or voice activated software. If somebody has difficulty typing or writing, making use of a dictation services at work can be useful. Scheduling more frequent meetings with a boss or supervisor in order to break down and track progress on large tasks is something that will demonstrate responsibility to an employer and also can be helpful for the adult with ADHD who is looking to cope better at work.

**Employment Accommodations (4)**

- Commonly encountered question:
  - “Should I tell my employer that I have ADHD?”
  - During interview process?
  - After being hired?

A similar question workers with ADHD might have similar to students with ADHD is “Should I tell my employer that I have ADHD?” Here weighing the pros and cons is a little trickier. In order to seek formal accommodations in the workplace one should disclose the ADHD diagnosis and impairments as soon as possible, however many prospective employees might worry, “If I disclose my ADHD, will I get hired?” So often people will hold off on disclosing that early. What about after they are hired and find themselves struggling? Again, it is a very individual decision and even in anecdotal reports from experts there has been no consensus on making a recommendation of whether or not one should disclose their disability. Often the informal accommodations can be negotiated without disclosing an ADHD diagnosis and some clinicians have found that when there is a supportive work place there can be a disclosure of the diagnosis and supervisors will actually consult with clinicians in ways to help the affected party. But these individual decisions around disclosure should be made carefully.

**Employment Accommodations (5)**

- Vocational rehabilitation and vocational counseling
  - Indicated in cases of severe, chronic employment problems
  - Targets job finding and job maintenance skills
  - Often provides ongoing support and communication with employer during employment

**Employment Accommodations (5)**

In cases of extreme coping difficulties at work for adults with ADHD, vocational rehabilitation services or vocational counseling services can be helpful, particularly for people who have difficulty finding and keeping employment. In some cases, vocational rehabilitation
counselors will have ongoing communication with employers helping to engage in root problem solving in regard to any difficulties in the workplace that may emerge.

**Treatments for Relationship Difficulties (1)**

- Adult ADHD may create problems in relationships. Three types are:
  - Marriages / committed relationships
  - Parenting
  - Co-workers
  - Friends

- There have been no outcome studies of marital/couples or family treatments that focus on the role of adult ADHD.

- It is helpful to find a clinician experienced with adult ADHD.

**Treatments for Relationship Difficulties (2)**

- Common interventions for relationship difficulties involving an adult with ADHD include:
  - Assessment for depression and treatment for adult ADHD
  - Communication skills training
  - Increase positive communication
  - Decrease negative communication
  - Problem-solving skills training
  - Cognitive modification of unrealistic expectations
  - Relationship enhancing activities

- Other coping skills for managing problem financial behavior draw on some of the other psychosocial interventions including cognitive behavioral therapy to look at thoughts around spending money, institute rules around delays in purchasing, or rules that someone consults with a trusted significant other before making a major purchase.

**Strategies for Financial and Money Management**

- Outsource financial matters
  - Set up electronic systems for finances
  - Paying bills
  - Automatic deposit in retirement plan or savings account
  - Tracking income and spending
  - Budgeting

- Coping skills for financial behaviors
  - CBT for cognitive and emotional issues around money
  - Coping strategies for spending problems (e.g., 24-hour delay)
  - Set-up weekly time for budgeting, paying bills, etc.

- There are a wide range of mental health professionals—psychologists, therapists, ADHD coaches, learning support specialists at post-secondary institutions, couples therapists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors who can be helpful.

- The important take-away message from this session is that there are many helpful treatment options for adults with ADHD. We hope that this session has given you useful information to better treat adults with ADHD. The Adult ADHD Toolkit that accompanies this session also provides materials to help educate your patients.

Thank you very much for your time.