

## **FAMILY RESEARCH SUMMARY:**

### **Study finds that in young children with ADHD, having other conditions may affect response to ADHD medication**

Children less than 6 years old with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are often diagnosed with additional conditions. Behavioral therapy is recommended for these children as well as stimulant medications or alpha agonists (AAs). It is not known when it is most effective for these children to start with stimulants or with AAs.

Researchers looked at how co-occurring conditions impact medications used, and also looked at whether or not other conditions led to different responses to these medications.

Researchers reviewed the records of 497 young children with ADHD from seven clinics across the United States. In addition to ADHD, these children often had language disorders, sleep disorders, disruptive behavior disorders, and autism. About 1 in 5 children had three or more conditions other than ADHD.

Stimulant medications were started 65% of the time with AA started 35% of the time. Children who started stimulants were more likely to have only ADHD. Kids with ADHD and either autism or a sleep disorder were more likely to start AAs. Stimulants appeared to be effective in children with only ADHD. Stimulants did not work as well for children with many co-occurring conditions. For children with many co-occurring conditions, the chance of benefit from stimulants and AAs was about the same.

This study concluded that stimulants should be the first medication prescribed for young children diagnosed with only ADHD. For children with many co-occurring conditions, more studies are needed to know when to start stimulants and when to start AAs.

#### **Reference:**

Deavenport-Saman A, et al. [Association of Coexisting Conditions, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Medication Choice, and Likelihood of Improvement in Preschool-Age Children: A Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics Research Network Study.](#) *J Child Adolesc Psychopharmacol.* 2022 Aug;32(6):328-336. PMID: 35787014