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SURVEY OF ADULTS REVEALS LIFE-LONG CONSEQUENCES OF ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

Results examine long-term social, professional and scholastic effects of ADHD

NEW YORK, May 6 -- Adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may have grown up with the condition, but have they outgrown its effects? Findings from a new national survey, "Capturing America's Attention," indicate that adults with ADHD experience life-long impairments in several facets of their lives, including educational and professional achievements, self-image and interpersonal relationships. This survey is the first to examine the long-term impact of ADHD among 1,001 adults. Results were presented today at the American Psychiatric Association (APA) annual meeting.

While the exact number of adults with ADHD is unknown, it is estimated that four percent of the U.S. adult population is affected by ADHD. The survey found that the repercussions of ADHD may prohibit adults with the condition from reaching their full academic and occupational potential, and limit their satisfaction with themselves and their relationships.

"The importance of diagnosing and helping adults with ADHD has often been debated by individuals, health care professionals and by society in general," said Joseph Biederman, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School and Chief of Pediatric Psychopharmacology at Massachusetts General Hospital. "The compelling results of this survey reinforce the fact that ADHD is a serious medical condition causing significant, life-long impairments. ADHD can no longer be dismissed as a 'fake' or 'made-up' disorder."

Negative Self-Image and Harmful Behaviors

Adults with ADHD are three times more likely to suffer from stress, depression or other problems with emotion. These emotional and physical effects can cause people with ADHD to "lose" days of their lives. "Lost days" may manifest as a day absent from work or several times throughout the month when the person is not fully engaged both physically and emotionally. About one in four (24 percent) adults with ADHD said that on 11 days per month, on average, they were prevented from normal activities such as work, due to poor mental or physical health, compared to only nine percent of the adults without ADHD.

Adults with ADHD are less likely to express a positive self-image. Only 40 percent of the adults with ADHD "strongly agree" that they have a bright outlook on their future, versus 67 percent of the adults surveyed without ADHD. Additionally, only half (50 percent) of the adults with ADHD surveyed like being themselves and accept themselves for who they are compared to 76 percent of the adults without ADHD.

Adults with ADHD are more likely to engage in harmful or antisocial behaviors, like smoking and drug use. Over 60 percent of the adults with ADHD surveyed have been addicted to tobacco while 52 percent have used drugs recreationally. In addition, people with ADHD are twice as likely to have been arrested, with 37 percent of the adults with ADHD surveyed acknowledging a prior arrest.

Interpersonal Relationships

Adults with ADHD have less stable relationships than those adults without ADHD. The survey found that people with ADHD are twice as likely to be divorced and/or separated. Less than half of those surveyed who are currently in a relationship say they are “completely satisfied” with their relationship partners or loved ones, compared to 58 percent of those people surveyed without ADHD.

Scholastic and Professional Achievements

Adults with ADHD tend to report lower educational achievement. They are less likely to be high school or college graduates. Approximately 17 percent of the adults surveyed with ADHD did not graduate high school, while only seven percent of those without ADHD did not graduate from high school. Only 18 percent of the adults with ADHD graduated from college compared to 26 percent of the adults without ADHD.

Adults with ADHD generally had a higher number of jobs over the course of the past ten years than adults without ADHD. On average, those with ADHD had 5.4 jobs compared to adults without ADHD who had 3.4 jobs. Of those surveyed, only 52 percent of the adults with ADHD are currently employed, compared to 72 percent of the adults surveyed without ADHD. Among adults with ADHD who are currently employed and have had more than one job in the past ten years, 43 percent report that they lost or left one or more of those jobs in some part because of their ADHD symptoms.

“By determining how people’s lives are impacted starting from childhood, we can begin to help people take control and reduce the potential for life-long impairment,” said Stephen V. Faraone, PhD, Harvard Medical School Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital.

The survey was conducted among 1,001 adults aged 18 and older by Roper ASW via telephone interviews. The sample list comprised of households where it was indicated in a health profile survey that there was a member in residence, at least 18 years of age or more, who had been diagnosed with ADHD. This survey was supported by Shire US Inc.

About ADHD

ADHD is a neurobiological disorder that manifests as a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development. Diagnosing ADHD in adults can help put many of their difficulties into perspective and help them better understand the reasons behind many lifelong symptoms. Proper diagnosis and effective treatment can help improve self-esteem, work performance and skills and social competencies. The most common behaviors exhibited by those who have ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. While hyperactivity is present in some adults that are diagnosed with ADHD, typically adults with ADHD are much less hyperactive compared to children with ADHD.

People who have ADHD, or who know someone they think might have ADHD, should contact a health care professional. Although there is no “cure” for ADHD, there are accepted treatments that specifically target its symptoms. Once diagnosed with ADHD, it is important to find the most appropriate treatment. The most common standard treatments include educational approaches, psychological or behavioral modification and stimulant drug therapy.

There are many reliable resources available for people who have ADHD, as well as those who have a loved one with ADHD. Some of those resources include, Children and Adults With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) (www.chadd.org) and the Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA) (www.add.org). Shire is the ADHD support company. For more information, please go to www.ADHDsupportcompany.com.

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