

## Trends in Scientific Publications on Mental Health Problems in Paediatric Journals

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To investigate the quantity, quality, geographic location and trends of publications on mental health conditions in the official journals of Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for paediatric trainees in the UK and the USA.

**Methods:** Articles from Archives of Disease in Childhood (ADC) and Pediatrics - two official journals for paediatric trainees in the UK and the USA - were retrieved by reviewing each monthly issue of the journals from January 2014-December 2016. All articles except conference abstracts, letters, news and corrections were included. The geographical location, article type and topic of the publication were analysed.

**Results:** In total, 146 publications on mental health conditions were published in these two journals in three years. 121 of these publications were in Pediatrics and 25 in ADC. The most common topics covered were attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (16%) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) (15%). The majority (68%) were observational studies; cohort, cross sectional and case-control studies. Most of the publications were from the USA (67%) followed by the UK (8%) and Australia (8%).

**Conclusions:** In both of the paediatric journals, publications relating to mental health mostly originated from the USA and studies were predominantly observational in nature. The commonest topics were ADHD and ASD with very few publications on post-traumatic stress disorder, gaming and pharmacotherapy.

### Introduction

Mental health conditions in the paediatric population are increasingly being recognised as a public health problem. Mental health conditions in childhood and adolescence can have adverse and long-lasting effects [1]. Training of the work force is one of the essential steps required to deal with this challenge [2].

Both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, through various resources contribute significantly to guidance, education and training of Paediatric trainees in the USA and the UK. Scientific publications contribute to the learning of trainees in all medical specialities and helps with keeping abreast with the developments in his/her field of practice.

The aim of this study was to investigate the trend, quantity, quality and geographic location of scientific publications in two frequently read journals by paediatrics trainees in the UK and the USA; namely Archives of Disease in Childhood (ADC) and Pediatrics.

### Methods

Online journal access articles from Archives of Disease in Childhood (ADC) [3] and Pediatrics [4] were retrieved from January 2014-December 2016. By reviewing each monthly issue of the individual journal, all published articles except conference abstracts, letters, news and corrections were included and analysed. The geographical location, article type and the topic of the publication were recorded. For convenience and ease of understanding, the topic of publication was grouped into various categories depending on the main mental health conditions on which the article focussed; e.g. autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). If the article was non-specific or focussed on three or more mental health conditions, it was grouped under the topic 'mental health'. Behavioural problems included conduct disorders. Alcohol and smoking were grouped

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under two separate categories. The rest of the topics were self-explanatory.

## Results

In total, there were 146 publications on mental health

conditions, published in these two journals from January 2014-December 2016. 121 publications were in Pediatrics and 25 of the publications were in ADC (Tables 1-3).

Overall, over the three years the most common topics were ADHD (16%) followed by ASD (15%). Most of them (68%) were

Topics	Pediatrics	ADC	Type of Study	Pediatrics	ADC	Country	Pediatrics	ADC
Depression	4		Observational	31	4	USA	28	
ADHD	13	2	Systematic review			Netherlands	1	1
Smoking	2		Policies/Guidelines	2		Canada	1	
Behavioural	7	1	Review	1	2	Rwanda		
Mental Health	4	1	RCT	5		Denmark	1	
Self harm	1		Meta-analysis	3		South Africa		
Substance Abuse						Norway	2	
Economics						Australia	5	
ASD	7	1				Finland		
ED	1	1				Sweden		
Pharmacology						Italy		1
PTSD						UK	3	2
Alcohol	2					Taiwan		1
ADHD and ASD						Canada		1
Gaming	1					Uganda	1	

Table 1. In 2014, in both Pediatrics and ADC, the most common topic was ADHD.

Topics	Pediatrics	ADC	Type of Study	Pediatrics	ADC	Country	Pediatrics	ADC
Depression		1	Observational	18	3	USA	30	1
ADHD	4		Systematic review	1	2	Netherlands	1	
Smoking	8		Policies/Guidelines	5		Canada		
Behavioural	5		Review	7	4	Rwanda		
Mental Health		3	RCT	2		Denmark		1
Self harm		1	Meta-analysis	2		South Africa		
Substance Abuse	5					Norway		
Economics		1				Australia	2	2
ASD	2	3				Finland	1	
ED	2					Sweden	1	
Pharmacology	2					UK		4
PTSD	1					Hong Kong		1
Alcohol	4							
ADHD and ASD	2							

Table 2. In Pediatrics in 2015, smoking was the most common topic and in ADC it was mental health.

Topics	Pediatrics	ADC	Type of Study	Pediatrics	ADC	Country	Pediatrics	ADC
Depression	2		Observational	37	7	USA	36	3
ADHD	4	1	Systematic review	2	1	Netherlands	1	1
Smoking	8		Policies/Guidelines	1		Canada	1	1
Behavioural	2		Review	3	2	Rwanda	1	
Mental Health	10	1	RCT	1		Denmark	2	
Self harm	2					South Africa	1	
Substance Abuse	6					Norway	1	
Economics	2	1				Australia	1	2
ASD	7	3				UK		3
ED	1	2						
ASD+ADHD		2						

Table 3. In 2016, in Pediatrics the most common topic was mental health and in ADC it was ASD.

observational studies. The majority of the publications were from the USA (67%) followed by UK (8%) and Australia (8%).

## Discussion

One of the major challenges for trainee doctors is to be abreast with various developments in their field. Scientific journals help, to an extent, to overcome this problem and contribute to learning and development. Awareness of mental health conditions and their management is becoming an increasing need for all involved professionals. Both the journals provided a significant amount of research and update on ADHD and ASD but lacked significantly on various topics such as post-traumatic stress disorders, pharmacotherapy, depression and eating disorders. Smoking, alcohol abuse and substance abuse were adequately covered.

In terms of hierarchy of evidence [5] publications included few systematic reviews, meta-analyses and randomised control trials (RCT) but the majority were observational studies. The vast majority of the publications were from the developed world

including USA, UK and Australia. The lack of publications from the developing world could be due to multiple reasons including awareness and education [2].

In conclusion, the majority of scientific publications on mental health conditions were published in Pediatrics. The most common topics were ADHD & ASD and the majority of articles were from the USA. Very few publications were on post-traumatic stress disorder, gaming and pharmacotherapy.

## References

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