

2014 ADHD Awareness Month Key Messages on Adult ADHD

It is estimated that four per cent of adults have ADHD.ⁱ

- Often thought of as a childhood disorder, in reality for most, ADHD is a chronic life-long disorder.ⁱⁱ
- Diagnosis of ADHD in adults can be complex due to the existence of commonly occurring (85%) coexisting disorders, such as anxiety or mood disorders and the overlap of symptoms.ⁱⁱⁱ
- A recent survey found that at least a third of adults with ADHD found it difficult to access an assessment and diagnosis due to the cost or access to a knowledgeable physician.^{iv}
- 90% of adults with ADHD remain untreated leading to unnecessary suffering and unwanted socioeconomic impacts.^v
- Common symptoms of ADHD include difficulty with regulating attention and being unable to focus for any length of time, hyper-focusing with an inability to break focus and difficulty with prioritizing focus to a level of impairment and possibly, but not necessarily hyperactivity and impulsivity. Other symptoms may include:^{vi}
 - Difficulty being organized, frequent procrastination, feelings of under achievement, starting numerous projects but not completing them, being easily bored, seeking out high risk activities, impatience, low tolerance for frustration, moods swings, difficulty regulating emotions, problems with self esteem, difficulty with social interaction, more job changes and job loss, less schooling, difficulty with detail orientated work and difficulty paying bills on time and managing money
- Untreated ADD/ADHD can cause numerous mental and physical health problems, difficulties with work and finances, and can put a strain on relationships.

While it is possible for many adults with ADHD to thrive in the workplace and find some of their ADHD traits such as high energy, problem solving and creativity as significant benefits in their chosen career, others if left untreated find their symptoms prevent them from working to their potential.

Adult ADHD symptoms can result in impairments at work including distractibility, mental restlessness, disorganization, impulsivity and procrastination – this leads to difficulties prioritizing tasks, time management and missed meetings and deadlines.^{vii}

- Sufferers may be easily distracted, finding it difficult to listen to others in a conversation, overlooking details, and not finishing work or projects.
- Symptoms may appear as a lack of focus, disorganization, forgetfulness, impulsivity, anxiety, difficulty regulating emotions and a lack of motivation.

Adults with ADHD may impulsively jump from job to job and career to career without adequately assessing the situation and reviewing all options. Sometimes finding a particular niche within a career can allow employees to succeed.^{viii}

- There is no magic cure or solution, however multiple treatments and strategies exist to increase productivity and success in the workplace.
- For adults with ADHD, taking time to assess an employment situation, implementing strategies and asking for accommodations when appropriate should be a part of becoming successful in a chosen career.

Employers can play a critical role in addressing an adult's ADHD challenges in the workplace.

- Due to the continued misunderstanding and stigma surrounding adult ADHD, employees may be reluctant to disclose their ADHD.
- The benefits of putting accommodations in place will not only assist the employee, but improve productivity and decrease discord within the office.

ADHD is a very treatable disorder. A variety of both medication and non-medication treatments for those with adult ADHD now exist.

- Receiving a proper assessment and using multimodal treatments may be extremely helpful with increasing focus and attention, decreasing distractibility, impulsivity and hyperactivity, and assisting with emotional regulation and organization.

Taking action by talking to your doctor and possibly your employer are an important step forward for the many Canadian adults who are impacted by ADHD and the challenges presented in the workplace.

- Engaging in an open dialogue that focuses on addressing current challenges and implementing controls like career counseling, treatment, and clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses, can assist any adult with ADHD to create a path where they are set-up for success.
- The Canadian Human Rights Act states that employers have a “duty to accommodate”, which requires that all employees have equal opportunity to succeed, including arranging accommodations for employees with mental health disabilities.^{ix}
- A recent Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) report, “*Minds that matter: Report on the consultation on human rights, mental health and addictions*,” has helped to clarify the duty of employers to accommodate individuals with mental health conditions.^x
 - It is important to note that the commission states, “The accommodation process usually begins when someone identifies they need accommodation due to a disability-related need and that it is the responsibility of the person with the disability is to “inform their employers of their needs”
- While employees are responsible for disclosing a disability, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Employment Standard outlines employer responsibilities, including: “Every employer shall notify its employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment processes.” (This regulation has staggered compliance deadlines depending on the size of an organizations)^{xi}
 - The OHRC cites the following as responsibilities for the employer:
 - Accept requests for accommodation in good faith
 - Request only information that is required to make the accommodation
 - Obtain expert advice or opinion where necessary
 - Take an active role in ensuring that possible solutions are examined
 - Maintain the confidentiality of persons with disabilities
 - Deal with accommodation requests in a timely way, and
 - Bear the cost of any required medical information or documentation

REFERENCES

ⁱ CADDAC website - <http://www.caddac.ca/cms/page.php?82>

ⁱⁱ CADDAC Socioeconomic paper 2013 - <http://adhdawarenessweek.ca/en/documents/Socioeconomic%20Policy%20Paper.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ CADDRA Guidelines - http://www.caddra.ca/cms4/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26&Itemid=70&lang=en

^{iv} CADDAC Socioeconomic paper 2013 - <http://adhdawarenessweek.ca/en/documents/Socioeconomic%20Policy%20Paper.pdf>

^v CADDAC Socioeconomic paper 2013 - <http://adhdawarenessweek.ca/en/documents/Socioeconomic%20Policy%20Paper.pdf>

^{vi} CADDAC <http://www.caddac.ca/cms/page.php?80>

^{vii} CADDAC website - <http://www.caddac.ca/cms/page.php?260>

^{viii} CADDAC website - <http://www.caddac.ca/cms/page.php?260>

^{ix} Canadian Human Rights Act <http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/duty-accommodate>

^x Ontario Human Rights Commission - <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/minds-matter-report-consultation-human-rights-mental-health-and-addictions>

^{xi} Integrated Accessibility Standards http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2011/elaws_src_regs_r11191_e.htm