

A COMPARISON OF CURRENT AND FORMER STIMULANT ABUSER'S SCORES ON THE WENDER UTAH RATING SCALE

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A recurring problem in the diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in adults is the retrospective diagnosis of childhood ADHD. The Wender Utah Rating Scale 25 item form has been found to have good reliability (Rossini & O'Connor, 1995) and to correctly identify 86% of adults with ADHD (Ward *et al.*, 1993). The prevalence of ADHD in populations of individuals abusing stimulants is higher than expected. This raises the question of whether the retrospective diagnosis of childhood attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in substance abusers is affected by their current drug use. To address this question we used scores on 25 questions from the Wender Utah Rating Scale. We compared a cohort of 28 subjects who are presently abusing methamphetamine with scores acquired as follow-up data from 47 former stimulant abusers treated for stimulant abuse in a Matrix clinic. All participants reside in the same area of San Bernardino County, California. There is a significant difference ($t=2.27$ $df,73$ $p=.026$) between the mean scores of the two groups. The mean score of the current abusers is 12 points higher than that of the former abusers. In addition the range is offset by about the same amount. The current abusers scores run from 9 to 93, while the scores of the former abusers run from 0 to 89. The variances of the two groups are equal. However, although 42% of the current abusers scored above the cutoff of 46 for ADHD and only 25% of the former abusers scored above 46, this difference was non significant. These results are consistent with about a 10 point effect of current methamphetamine abuse on the Wender Utah Rating Scale. Thus stimulant use may affect a subject's perception of his or her childhood, and the number of abusers identified with adult ADHD may be over estimated.

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