Today’s piece was prepared by Jeremiah Davis, MD, MPH, and is based on an article in the New York Times, “ADHD Seen in 11% of US Children as Diagnoses Rise” <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/01/health/more-diagnoses-of-hyperactivity-causing-concern.html?pagewanted=1&_r=0&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130401>

This article claims that 11% of school aged children (15% of school-age boys and 7% of school-age girls) have received a diagnosis of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); older children saw higher rates of diagnosis, with 19% of high-school aged boys and 10% of high-school aged girls. The source for these statistics is the NY Times’ own statistical analysis of data from the National Survey of Chidlren’s Health (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/slaits/nsch.htm>) 2011-2012 dataset. While the background regarding data collection through the Centers for Disease Control is available at a separate website, the Times’ own analysis is not described in any detail. The Times’ estimates are higher than those provided by the National Institute of Mental Health for lifetime prevalence of children at adolescents of 12.9% for boys and 4.9% for girls. Additionally, amongst 13-18 year olds (high school age) the prevalence ranges from 8.1-10% for all genders. These data derive from a peer reviewed publication (linked below) in 2010.

The Times’ piece implies that ADHD diagnoses are rising inappropriately, and relies on those who have “ever [been] given a diagnosis” – a measure of prevalence (cases at the moment the data was gathered). The type of increases in diagnosis that the Times’ implies is usually measured via incidence (cases per unit time). While related, these two concepts are not interchangeable, and drawing such a conclusion can be misleading.

**RESOURCES ON ADHD:**

* **National Institute of Mental Health’s Health and Education page on ADHD**

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml> *Includes current prevalence estimates, as referenced in NIH study:*

Merikangas KR, He J, Burstein M, Swanson SA, Avenevoli S, Cui L, Benjet C, Georgiades K, Swendsen J. Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: Results from the National Comorbidity Study- Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry. 2010 Oct;49(10):980-989.

* **AAP recommendations for ADHD diagnosis** *Ensure correct diagnoses via CDC website resources that nicely summarize AAP recommendations* <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/guidelines.html>

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!