

CHILDHOOD MEDICALIZATION AND ADHD: OVERDIAGNOSIS, PRESCRIBING TRENDS, AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS - A LITERATURE REVIEW

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RESUMO

This literature review examines the medicalization of childhood through attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), focusing on overdiagnosis, psychostimulant prescribing trends, and ethical-clinical implications. Based on four selected MEDLINE/PubMed studies published between 2020 and 2025, the work discusses how broader diagnostic criteria, greater social recognition of ADHD, educational pressures, performance-related expectations, and pharmaceutical expansion may contribute both to the identification of previously neglected cases and to the risk of diagnosis and treatment in mild or subclinical presentations. The review emphasizes the need for rigorous diagnostic assessment centered not only on symptom presence, but also on persistence, contextual expression, functional impairment, and benefit-risk evaluation, aiming to reduce excessive medicalization while preserving access to treatment for children with substantial impairment.

Palavras-chave: Attention Deficit Disorder With Hyperactivity; Overdiagnosis; Medicalization; Psychostimulants; Child Psychiatry.