

Reviewer's report

Title: Do Inattention and Hyperactivity Symptoms Equal Scholastic Impairment? Evidence from three European Cohorts

Version: 1 **Date:** 28 February 2007

Reviewer: Gregory A Fabiano

Reviewer's report:

I was glad for the opportunity to review the interesting manuscript entitled, "Do Inattention and Hyperactivity Symptoms Equal Scholastic Impairment? Evidence from three European Cohorts." The paper is well written and utilizes three interesting national datasets to investigate the association between teacher-reported academic impairment and ADHD symptom ratings. I have a few comments that I hope are helpful to the authors in their interesting work.

1. The major concern with the manuscript concerns the approach to the data analysis. I wondered why the authors made dimensional ADHD symptom measures categorical. In particular, by focusing only on whether ratings were severe, or not, important information may have been overlooked. This appears to be particularly problematic in the investigation of gender, as girls' ratings of "severe" were much less frequent, on average, than boys. The present categorical approach may be masking the association between girls ADHD symptom ratings and academic impairment. At the least, if the authors choose to persist in the present approach, the rationale for the current approach should be described and justified.

Minor Comments

2. The measure of academic impairment is only a single item, and some readers might argue more traditional measures of academic impairment such as standardized achievement tests should be used. There is evidence the authors one-item measure of academic impairment corresponds to these other measures, however, and can cite either of the papers below to support their methodology.

Fabiano, G.A., Pelham, W.E., Waschbusch, D., Gnagy, E.M., Lahey, B.B., Chronis, A.M., Onyango, A.N., Kipp, H., Lopez-Williams, A. & Burrows-MacLean, L. (2006). A practical impairment measure: Psychometric properties of the Impairment Rating Scale in samples of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and two school-based samples. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 35, 369-385.

Gresham, F.M., MacMillan, D.L., Bocian, K.M. (1997). Teachers as "tests": Differential validity of teacher judgements in identifying students at-risk for learning difficulties. *School Psychology Review*, 26, 47-60.

3. Table 1 should include the percentage of boys vs. girls in each sample.

4. Page 12, third paragraph. There seem to be more parsimonious answers for lower inattention scores in Finland, including the earlier data collection date, differences in methodology, and older age of the sample than exposures to toxic substances during prenatal development. You mention some of these in the next paragraph, and the exposure to toxic substances comment seems a bit out of place here.

5. I agree with the authors that these results suggest important implications for screening and preventive treatment. I would have liked to have seen more discussion of the practical implications of these findings - what do they suggest front-line clinicians and educators should do with respect to screening and follow-up? For example, do these findings suggest one could simply ask teachers a one-item question about the child's impairment in school and a few symptom items rather than a longer interview/rating scale plus an academic achievement test? More discussion of the implications of the findings for practice would be welcome (for an expanded discussion of these issues, please see Pelham, Fabiano, & Massetti, 2005).

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.