

CNS Vital Signs (CNSVS) as a Tool to Screen for ADHD/LD in Student Athletes

Objective: To estimate the incidence of ADHD and learning disabilities in freshmen student athletes. The prevalence of ADHD and learning disabilities is frequently reported to be higher in athletes than in the general population.

Methods: Forty-six entering student athletes were screened in groups (6-10 per group) using a computerized cognitive battery (CNS Vital Signs), the screening subtests of the Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults, and rating scales (Brown ADD Scale, Wender-Utah Rating Scale). The testing took approximately 90 minutes per group.

Results: Twenty-eight (61%) were identified as having ADHD and/or a learning disability on the basis of the screening. Their diagnoses were subsequently confirmed by formal neuropsychological evaluations and steps were taken to provide appropriate treatment services. Only four of the 28 (approximately 15%) had been previously evaluated. All of the 46 students were successful during their first few semesters in college. With the addition of Supplemental Instruction, a systematic educational approach used in core academic subjects, the LD/ADHD students did almost as well as the non-disabled students.

Conclusion: A brief, group administered battery can be used to screen for ADHD and learning disabilities in at-risk college students. The incidence of these disorders appears to be higher in student athletes.