

The Ontario Drug Policy Research Network (ODPRN) conducted multiple studies on the effectiveness, safety and accessibility of medications used in the treatment of adult ADHD using multiple research methods.



- There has been an increase in the number of prescriptions and costs of ADHD medications for adults across Canada.
- Utilization has gone up 119% and cost 153% during the 5 year study period.



The Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program criteria have not been updated with consideration for adults with ADHD despite this increased utilization.



Types of treatment for ADHD

- In Canada, there are two types of treatment approved for the treatment of adult ADHD.



- Available as short-acting formulations and long-acting formulations.
- Stimulants are also a controlled substance due to their abuse potential.
- All stimulants are listed as a General Benefit under the publicly-funded drug program in Ontario.



- The only approved non-stimulant is atomoxetine and it is listed under the Exceptional Access Program; there is some suggestion that this restriction can limit access.

ATOMOXETINE

Utilization

17,482 Adults

Prescribed provincially-funded stimulant or atomoxetine medication in Ontario in 2014



- The transition from adolescent to adult can be a challenge when accessing mental health services for patients with ADHD, and can include breaks in coverage for medication through the ODB.

Efficacy

- Overall, stimulant drugs are associated with an improvement in symptoms.
- The non-stimulant drug, atomoxetine, has similar efficacy to the stimulants.



Safety ⚠️

- There are several common side effects with both types of drugs such as insomnia, dry mouth and decreased appetite.
 - Health Canada has issued several warnings including possible increased risk of sudden/cardiac death, and increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours.
- Long-term stimulant treatment is associated with increases in blood pressure and heart rate. However, there is little data on the long-term safety of stimulants in older adults (50+) with medical conditions.



- It is important to note that a review of the literature indicates that misuse/abuse/diversion occurs, and is especially prevalent in college-age students.
- However the number of potentially inappropriate prescriptions in Canada is low (<0.3% in 2013/14) and more research is needed.
- Ontario had the highest rate, followed by Alberta, and British Columbia.

Reimbursement options



List atomoxetine as Limited Use (for adults)

- Atomoxetine was just as effective as stimulants for treatment of adult ADHD.
- Accessibility would be increased and the generic pricing rule (i.e., cost of generic product is 25% of brand-name cost) could be enforced which would decrease the overall cost by approximately \$1 million annually.



No age restriction should be applied to stimulants or atomoxetine.

- There is insufficient evidence to suggest that age affects response to ADHD treatment in adult patients.

Recommendations for consideration



Monitor the cardiovascular health of those using the drugs, especially older adults with medical conditions.



Health care practitioners should remain vigilant about the potential for misuse/abuse/diversion of stimulant medications.

- Strategies and programs to prevent diversion could potentially reduce overall misuse of these medications.