ACADEMIC ADVISING AS AN INTERVENTION FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ADHD

AHEAD Annual Conference 2015

Manju Banerjee, Ph.D.  
VP Educational Research  
Director, LCIRT  
manjubanerjee@landmark.edu

Loring Brinckerhoff, Ph.D.  
Director, Office of Disability Policy  
Educational Testing Service  
lbrinckerhoff@ets.org
Agenda

- Scope of issue
- New understanding of adult ADHD
- Interventions for ADHD
- A hybrid model of advising as intervention for college students with ADHD
- Case study examples
- Recommendations for application
Scope of Issue - College Students with ADHD

- Prevalence: 2-8 percent of college students (Dupaul et al. 2009; Green & Rabiner, 2012)
- Thomas et al. (2015) – 7.2 percent
- Subtypes of ADHD (DSM-5)
- ADHD + Co-occurring disorders
- High Functioning ADHD

Aborted College Experience
Cost of ADHD

- ADHD creates a significant financial burden regarding the cost of medical care and work loss for patients and family members.

- Using a prevalence rate of 5%, the annual societal “cost” for ADHD is estimated to be between $36 and $52 billion, in 2005.

- The total excess cost of ADHD in the US in 2000 was $31.6 billion.

Source: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html)
Scope of Issue - College Students with ADHD

- ADHD presentations (DSM-5)
  - Inattentive
  - Hyperactive-Impulsive
  - Combined Inattentive and Hyperactive-Impulsive

- Presentations can change over the life span
- First time diagnosis for teens and adults
- Mild – Moderate – Severe
- Co-occurring – diagnostic or subthreshold
ADHD and Co-Occurring Conditions

- Can now be diagnosed with ADHD and ASD (DSM-5)
- Kessler et al. 2006 study on comorbidity on adults ages 18-44:
  - Mood Disorders: 38.3
  - Anxiety Disorders: 47.1
  - Social Anxiety: 29.3
  - Impulse Disorder: 3.7
  - Any Psychiatric Disorder: 88.6

- Co-occurs with Personality Disorders (Brown, 2013)
- Common risk gene pool: ADHD, ASD, OCD, Depressive Disorder, Schizophrenia

ADHD and Learning Disorders

- “Learning and attention problems are on a continuum, are interrelated and usually coexist.” (Mayes, Calhoun & Crowell, 2000, p.417)

- Functional limitation in Working Memory (auditory verbal working memory) is associated with achievement in reading and math; spatial working memory and inattention strongly associated with math achievement (Rogers at al., 2011)
New Understanding of Adult ADHD

- Not a behavior disorder but a developmental impairment of the self-regulatory and EF system
- Manifests itself differently in adulthood (DSM-V)
- Impairments are situationally variable (Brown, 2013)
- Impact of dopamine and norepinephrine pathways
  - motivation, management of emotions (Barkley, 2012)
  - activating and sustaining effort (Brown, 2013)
  - sleep and alertness (Gau & Chiang, 2009; Van Veen et al., 2010)
  - effect of consequences
New Understanding of Adult ADHD

- ADHD can remit in adulthood for some, but 30-70% of childhood ADHD continues into adulthood.

- Less hyperactivity in adulthood; inattention persists and increase in anxiety and personality disorder symptomatology (subthreshold levels).

- EF problems are consistently important predictors of adult clinical diagnoses of ADHD (Kessler et al., 2010).

- Functional limitations may not show up on standardized assessment measures of performance and abilities.

- Above average cognitive profile; barriers to college success.
Barriers to College Success

- Stamp, Banerjee & Brown (2014)
  - Perceptions of college students with ADHD
  - Extensive semi structure interviews with 12 students
  - High cognitive profile (FSIQ >120; transfer)
  - Primary challenges to college success:
    * feelings of shame and guilt
    * avoidance behavior as coping mechanism
    * lack of understanding of impact of ADHD
    * poor awareness/use of available college resource

Complexities of college students with ADHD are poorly understood
Interventions for ADHD

- **Pharmacological**
  - Medication
  - Medication management

- **Accommodations and Support Services**
  - Academic and residential accommodations
  - Support technologies
  - Tutorial services

- **Psychosocial Intervention**
  - Coaching
  - CBT
  - Counseling
Challenges of ADHD Accommodations

- Documentation can be expensive
- Limitations of objective measures of assessment
- Difference in accommodations between HS and college
- Malingering
- Reluctance to use accommodations and disability services
- Mismatched expectations of students/parents and institutional stakeholders
- Myths and misconceptions about adult ADHD
Psychosocial Interventions

- **Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)**
  (Ramsay & Rostain, 2015)

  - ADHD symptoms
  - Maladaptive Core Beliefs
  - Compensatory strategies

- **Case Conceptualization** – framework for understanding student reactions and reactions are rooted in developmental experiences and belief systems (perceptions)
**Psychosocial Interventions (cont.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADHD symptom interference</th>
<th>Maladaptive Core Beliefs</th>
<th>Compensatory strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studying for an upcoming exam</th>
<th>I know I won’t do well even if I study</th>
<th>Procrastination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Completion</th>
<th>Tasks are either boring or interesting</th>
<th>Not engage in task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talking to Professor</th>
<th>Negative perceptions about authority</th>
<th>Avoid talking to professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Coaching

- Inquiry-based approach where both student and coach are jointly engaged in the process goal setting and making-decision (D’Alessio & Banerjee, under review)
- Goal - facilitate student’s self-determination and developmental growth
- Focus – develop executive function and self-regulatory abilities
- Approach – non-directive, open-ended questions, safe space, empathetic listening
- Accountability
Academic Advising

- Academic advising is integral to the mission of teaching and learning for institutions of higher education
- Communicates the mission, policies, and programs of the college to students
- Advising covers a broad spectrum of responsibilities
  - imparting the ideals of higher education
  - pragmatics of course enrollment
  - facilitation of academic and career goal development of advisees (O’Banion, 2012)
Why Academic Advising as Intervention?

- Advisor-advisee engagement is part of academic life for all students; no stigma

- Advising is anchored in setting up a plan of study and signifies movement towards graduation and future employment

- Academic advising can have significant impact on graduation and retention (MacArthur, 2005)

- Students rate academic advising to be one of the most important aspects of their postsecondary education (Hillman, 2009)
ADHD Difficulties are Often Addressed in Advising

- Difficulty deciding on a major or setting up a plan of study; similar to other at-risk populations (Fentress & Collopy, 2011)

- Poor academic outcomes (*grades, attendance, assignment completion*) (Advocat et al. 2011)

- Miscommunication with other faculty
  - *perceptions of academic functioning* (DuPaul et al., 2009)

- Medically related exceptions to institutional protocol
  - *long absences*
  - *pre-requisite exceptions*
Models of Academic Advising

- **Prescriptive**
  A top-down approach where the advisor is directive and informs the student about course selection, degree requirements, and registration

- **Developmental**
  A shared responsibility between the student and the advisor; advisor responds to student’s queries and directs student to campus resources fostering independent decision-making

- **Integrated**
  A combination of the previous two models, where the student is informed, as well as, counseled to make independent decisions regarding academic, career, and life goals (Heisserer & Parette, 2002)
Academic Advising and Coaching

Differences

- **Advising** - focus on academic program of study and educational goals
- **Coaching** – focus is on executive function abilities and self-regulation to better manage academic and social life within the context of higher education goals

Similarities

- Student-centered and developmentally oriented
- Goal setting
- Self-determination and self-advocacy
- Open ended non-directive questioning
Hybrid Model of Academic Advising as ADHD Intervention

- Readiness
- Self-Awareness
- Goal Setting
- Action and Engagement
- Accountability

Trust Relationship
Hybrid Model of Academic Advising as ADHD Intervention

- Readiness
  - Assessing and understanding current level of maturation
  - Level of dependence on past scaffolds/supports
  - Motivation and willingness to engage in the intervention process
  - Current point of performance
  - Understanding advisor-advisee role and expectations in higher education (*students and parents*)
Hybrid Model of Academic Advising as ADHD Intervention

- Self-Awareness
  - Disability documentation as it applies to self
  - Understanding of strengths and weaknesses
  - Communication and self-advocacy
  - Understanding negative perceptions and self-sabotaging behaviors
Hybrid Model of Academic Advising as ADHD Intervention

- **Goal Setting**
  - Understanding institutional policies, degree options and degree plans
  - Setting academic goals for program, semester, and career
  - Understanding the process of goal setting – evaluating progress, flexibility and readjustment, alignment of institutional goals with personal educational goals
Hybrid Model of Academic Advising as ADHD Intervention

- **Action and Engagement**
  - Developing approaches and strategies to address EF challenges
  - Application of copying skills – what will be different and how the plan will be executed
  - Accepting and utilizing campus resources; support network
  - Effective and independent communication, actively seeking feedback (*self-respect, respect for others, dealing with conflict and criticism*)
Hybrid Model of Academic Advising as ADHD Intervention

- **Accountability**
  - Operationalizing responsibilities within academic context
  - Articulating consequences that are meaningful to student (link to reward pathways)
  - Accepting consequences for behavior
  - Shift in mindset
Case Study – Beth

23 year old female

**Diagnosis:** ADHD-inattentive; residual expressive-receptive language disorder (2011)

**Cognitive:** VC-134, PR-111, WM-111, PS-93

**Transfer:** attended 2 colleges in the past

**Presenting issue:** poor attendance, incomplete work, poor grades, fear of authority

Strong reasoning ability, creativity, and well-developed academic skills; struggles with ill-defined assignments and keeping herself organized
Case Study – Beth (cont.)

- Difficulty in previous college stemmed from fear of approaching faculty
- Missed deadlines for assignments – downward spiral
- Poor attendance record – compounded by illness
- Often emotional at advising meetings – crying
- One faculty member is “out to get me”
# Case Study – Beth – Discussion

## Stages of Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal Setting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action/Engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study – Sam

20 year old male

**Diagnosis:** ADHD-inattentive; Tourette’s; Anxiety (2010)

**Cognitive:** VC-122, PR-105, WM -125, PS-97

**Transfer:** Attended a small liberal arts college previously; academic warning due to poor grades; withdrew for a year

**Presenting issue:** poor attendance, poor grades, inconsistent communication with faculty, appears not to care (consequences); poor sleep

“Faculty make a big deal of the small stuff. Not sure if college is for me.”
**Case Study – Sam**

- Told advisor early in the semester that he was slipping
- Not comfortable as to why he was in this particular college – bored with school and not having fun
- Did not see any value in advising meetings, said it would be more productive to spend time on assignments
- Bi-monthly conference with parents, advisor, and students
## Case Study – Sam – Discussion

### Stages of Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advising Curriculum at Landmark College

Word Document
Recommendations for Application

- **Advisor orientation:**
  - Training on profiles of adult ADHD
  - Understanding of shared principles, approaches and skills between coaching and advising

- **First year advising and Transfer student advising**

- **Adapting advising curriculum**
End of Session