



The World Health Organization (WHO)

Subject: Urgent Request for Inclusion of Methylphenidate on the WHO Essential Medicines List for Children

April 1st, 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Sociedad Española de Psiquiatría y Salud Mental (Spanish Society of Psychiatry and Mental Health) writes to express its strong support for the inclusion of methylphenidate on the World Health Organization's (WHO) Essential Medicines List for children. We believe this addition is critical for addressing the significant public health concern of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children worldwide, particularly in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).

ADHD is a prevalent neurodevelopmental disorder affecting an estimated 5-7% of children globally. Untreated, it can lead to severe academic difficulties, social impairment, increased accident risk, and a higher likelihood of developing anxiety, depression, and substance abuse in adulthood.

Decades of research have established methylphenidate as the most effective first-line medication for ADHD. It significantly improves focus, impulse control, and academic and social outcomes. Leading medical bodies, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and WHO guidelines, recognize methylphenidate as a standard treatment for moderate-to-severe ADHD. Studies consistently demonstrate significant symptom reduction (70-80%) in children treated with methylphenidate compared to placebo.

Children with untreated ADHD often struggle academically and are more likely to drop out. Methylphenidate enhances focus, working memory, and impulse control, enabling children to reach their full potential. It also improves social interactions, reducing bullying and social isolation risks.

Untreated ADHD is associated with higher rates of substance abuse, criminal behavior, and other mental health disorders in adulthood. Early intervention with methylphenidate significantly reduces the risk of developing these secondary problems. Many LMICs lack access to ADHD diagnosis and treatment. The absence of methylphenidate from the WHO Essential Medicines List further exacerbates this issue, leaving millions of children without essential care.



Including methylphenidate would increase affordability and accessibility, ensuring more children receive the necessary treatment.

The Sociedad Española de Psiquiatría y Salud Mental urges the WHO to recognize the critical need for methylphenidate in the treatment of childhood ADHD by adding it to the Essential Medicines List. This action will have a profound positive impact on the lives of millions of children and adolescents worldwide, especially in LMICs.

We are committed to supporting the WHO in this endeavor and are available to provide further information or assistance as needed.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marina Diaz-Marsá
President
Spanish Society of Psychiatry
and Mental Health

Dr. Josep-Antoni Ramos-Quiroga
ADHD Task Force Chair
Spanish Society of Psychiatry
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