

WHY TREATMENT ORDER MATTERS: SUPPORTING MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN WITH ADHD

1. THE ISSUE

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) runs in the family.

- **25%–50%** of parents of children with ADHD also experience ADHD themselves.

When parents have ADHD, it not only impacts their daily lives, it can sometimes make it harder to support their child's treatment.

Helping both parents and children together can lead to better outcomes.

Prior research shows these treatments work:

Stimulant medications for adults with ADHD

Parent behavioural therapy for young children with ADHD

2. STUDY GOAL

To study the **order of treatments** for families where parent and child both have ADHD.

- What works best? To start with parent medication first or parent behavioural therapy first?



3. WHAT WE DID

This pilot clinical trial tested different ordering of treatments.

Mothers started with either medication or parent behavioural therapy. After 8 weeks, they either stayed on the same treatment or added the other one.

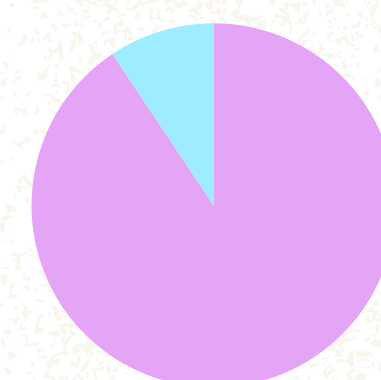
This created **four different treatment sequences**.

1. Medication → stay on medication
2. Parent behavioural therapy → stay on parent behavioural therapy
3. Medication → add parent behavioural therapy
4. Parent behavioural therapy → add medication

Who was in the study:

- 35 mothers and their children
- Average age of child: 6
- Average age of mother: 40

Hispanic/Latine
9.4%



White
90.6%

4. WHAT WE LOOKED AT

- Changes in child's ADHD symptoms and how much symptoms impact their daily lives
- Changes in mother's ADHD symptoms and parenting strategies
- We checked in with families at the beginning, at week 8, and again at week 16.

5. WHAT WE FOUND

Parent behavioural therapy
→ add medication

This order worked best for improving child's ADHD symptoms, their impact on the child, and parenting strategies.

Note:

- Mothers taking ADHD medications reported improvements in their own symptoms. However, it had little impact on their child's ADHD symptoms or on parenting.



6. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Early findings suggest that in families where both parents and children have ADHD, a combination of parent ADHD medication and parent behavioural therapy can be beneficial.
- Parents with ADHD need more than just medication!
 - Starting with parent behavioural therapy before medication may lead to better outcomes for children and parenting.

7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Would fathers and other caregivers show similar improvements across these treatment sequences?
- Are the benefits of starting with parent behavioural therapy long lasting?



Scan for article:



Infographic is based on:

Lui, J. H. L., Chronis-Tuscano, A., Almirall, D., Whitlock, K. B., French, W., & Stein, M. A. (2025). Sequencing Stimulant Medication and Behavioral Parent Training in Multiplex ADHD Families: A Pilot SMART. *The Journal of clinical psychiatry*, 86(1). <https://doi.org/10.4088/JCP.24m15463>