



Rationale for 'ONTRAC' Program for Teens (14-17) with ADHD

Attentional Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in adolescents is a prevalent and impairing condition. The majority of childhood cases continue to meet the criteria of adolescent ADHD, resulting in up to 6% of the general population of adolescents having this condition.

Typical impairments include:

- Academic difficulties
- Risk for repeating grades
- Suspended from school
- Dropping out of school
- Higher risk for tobacco, alcohol, and other substance use
- More likely to engage in high-risk behaviours such as antisocial activities
- Riskier sexual behaviours
- Relationship difficulties

Accordingly, adolescence is a developmental phase when psychosocial intervention may be particularly important because children transition from close supervision with teachers and parents to increased independence.

Although medications have been widely used as an effective treatment for many years in children, adolescents and adults, medication alone is often not enough as a sole intervention for ADHD. Most adolescents continue to have residual symptoms therefore necessitating the need for evidence-based psychological intervention in order to provide a more comprehensive treatment.

Given the above, the ADHDWA is offering a program aimed at facilitating the many transitions of this developmental age, preparing them with skills to manage these challenges more effectively.

Ontrac is now one of the 'Services Learning Project' options for UWA's medical students.

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The program comprises 3 Modules:

- Psychoeducation
- Adaptive thinking
- Skills building

Module1: Psychoeducation

For individuals to understand ADHD, they need to know what characteristics affect them and how. ADHD is recognised as a disorder that seldom exists in isolation. It has a list of co-morbid conditions like anxiety and depression, and learning disorders like dyslexia and dyscalculia that can interfere with academic efforts, social awareness and overall achievement. Many individuals have a combination of these characteristics, not just impulsivity/ hyperactivity or inattention. Children with ADHD are at significant risk to face several challenges in their academic environments. They may not have a specific learning disability, but their academic success may be compromised by the lag in their executive functioning capacity.

This module covers:

- How ADHD is diagnosed
- That ADHD is a neurobiological disorder that impairs the self-management system in the brain
- That ADHD is a valid diagnosis
- That it is not related to laziness or lack of intelligence
- Treatment options

Module2: Adaptive Thinking

The focus of this module is to help the participants think about problems and challenges in the most adaptive and realistic way possible. This is done by helping the children understand their ADHD-related issues from a CBT perspective.

The module covers:

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- Relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviours
 - How to identify and dispute negative thoughts
 - How to look at situations realistically and make rational choices about the best possible solutions
 - Strategies for keeping thoughts in check
 - Cognitive distortions/thinking traps
 - Core beliefs
 - Exploring values

Module3: Skills building

The CBT model of ADHD suggests that many of the consequences of neurobiological symptoms of ADHD are maintained or exacerbated by a lack of adequate psychosocial coping skills (Safren, Sprich, Chulvick, & Otto, 2004). Given this, the objective of the skills building module is to teach the children compensatory executive skills, such as time management (planning, organizing and prioritising), problem-solving, and management of distractibility and procrastination that can exacerbate ADHD symptoms. The goal is to prevent the development/emergence of some of the impairments that can arise as a result of untreated or partially treated ADHD.

The **first** part of the skills building module involves teaching time management, organisation, planning, prioritising and problem-solving skills.

The **second** part involves using the skills learned in the first part to manage the environment, distractibility, and procrastination.

This module covers:

- Understanding time and identifying what you really spend your time on.
- The use of a diary and maintaining a disciplined routine in order to manage time more effectively.
- The use of problem-solving skills to:
 - break down big tasks into steps and
 - choose a best solution for a problem when no solution is necessarily ideal

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- Recognise the length of time they can hold their attention to tasks and to divide tasks into chunks that do not exceed this time, as well the management of distractibility.
 - Use learned skills to address problems with getting started and completing tasks.
 - Communication skills

Eligibility

Participant selection: Teens aged 14-17 who meet full criteria for ADHD as their main diagnosis.

Parent Involvement

Pre/post intervention questionnaires:

- Barkley's Rating Scale (BFIS-CA) Parent Rating Scale (pre and post)
- Preferred Parenting Style Questionnaire
- Attend a free, 45 min one- on- one session with founding psychologist. These sessions will be confirmed after the program starts and you will be contacted to arrange a time that is workable for you.
- Attend the Q&A session with your child. Panel - Psychiatrist, GP and nutritionist.

Facilitators:

Founding psychologist, together with medical/psychology students from UWA who have an interest in ADHD or who have chosen 'Ontrac' as their service-learning project.

Place and Time:

OnTrac is delivered from ADHD WA in Nedlands on Wednesdays from 5-7pm. The program follows the school term, for seven weeks.

The program is offered under Medicare's Better Access Initiative, namely Group Therapy (item 80120). In order to get the rebate, participants need to provide a

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referral from their Pediatrician/Psychiatrist or a Mental Health Plan from their GP stating the item number above.

A free mentoring program for children who have completed 'OnTrac' is currently being discussed.

For more information on the program please contact ADHD WA and speak to Akvile or Melanie.

Thank you

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