

ADHD Update : July to October 2024

1. Medication Shortages and Supply Issues:

- **Ongoing Shortages:** The UK has been grappling with severe shortages of ADHD medications due to global demand spikes and production delays. Medications like methylphenidate (Concerta XL), Lisdexamfetamine (Elvanse), and atomoxetine (Strattera) have faced intermittent supply issues, especially modified-release versions

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- **Bioequivalent Alternatives:** Healthcare providers are increasingly switching patients to bioequivalent alternatives to address supply gaps. For example, Concerta XL has several alternatives such as Affenid XL and Matoride XL

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. However, switching between formulations requires careful consideration of bioavailability, especially when dealing with medications like Equasym XL, which currently lacks a direct alternative

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- **Elvanse for Adults and Children:** There has been some confusion regarding the use of Elvanse (Lisdexamfetamine) for adults versus children. Elvanse Adult and Elvanse for children are identical in formulation, but they are licensed for different age groups. This has led to increased flexibility in off-label prescribing to adults

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2. Research Advances and Alternative Treatments:

- **Targeted Medications:** There is a strong push toward developing more refined ADHD medications that offer better symptom control with fewer side effects. Longer-lasting formulations, such as extended-release or patch-based delivery systems, are being explored to enhance treatment adherence

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- **Non-Medication Approaches:** Research from institutions like King's College London is exploring alternative treatments for ADHD, such as physical exercise (both cardio and non-cardio), eye movement training, and dietary interventions like tryptophan supplementation. These non-pharmacological treatments are being studied as either standalone or adjunctive therapies

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- **Mindfulness and Cognitive Techniques:** Mindfulness-based practices continue to be investigated as complementary treatments for ADHD, aimed at reducing impulsivity and improving focus in both children and adults

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3. Service Delays and Backlogs:

- **Long Waiting Times:** Many NHS Trusts have reported significant delays in ADHD diagnostic services. For instance, in some regions, adults are waiting up to 10 years for an assessment, forcing healthcare providers to prioritize only the most urgent cases, often those involving severe behavioural risks like aggression or self-harm

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- **Impact of Backlogs:** The long wait times are compounded by the ADHD medication shortages, leaving many patients in limbo, unable to either secure a diagnosis or obtain consistent treatment. The NHS has issued recommendations for patients to ration their current medication supplies by using them only on essential days

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4. Awareness Campaigns and Community Support:

- **ADHD Awareness Month:** October 2024 marked ADHD Awareness Month, which has increasingly been reframed as ADHD Empowerment Month. The focus of this year's campaign was on building community solidarity and reducing stigma. Events and initiatives emphasized practical solutions for daily challenges, promoting greater understanding in schools, workplaces, and healthcare settings

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- **Workplace and School Initiatives:** In the UK, there has been a surge in workplace initiatives aimed at making environments more ADHD-friendly. Companies are beginning to introduce flexible working schedules and neurodiversity programs to better support employees with ADHD. Schools are also focusing on early identification of ADHD traits and adapting teaching methods to accommodate students with ADHD

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5. Policy and Legal Considerations:

- **Mental Health Policies:** As the UK heads toward a general election in 2024, there are discussions about potential mental health reforms that could benefit the ADHD community. While the government has pledged to reduce waiting times for NHS services, it is unclear whether this will extend to mental health and ADHD assessments

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- **Structured Support Research:** ADHD UK is conducting a study on the support structures available to individuals with ADHD, focusing on experiences with exams, workplace accommodations, and access to disability allowances. The findings could shape future policies and interventions

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