Adult ADHD in complex Community Mental Health Settings: Safe Prescribing, Clinical Boundaries and System Considerations

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Abstract

The growing recognition of adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has led to a significant rise in referrals to community mental health services internationally. While the evidence base for pharmacological treatment of ADHD in adults is well established in controlled research settings, real-world clinical presentations are often considerably more complex. Comorbid mood disorders, trauma histories, emotional dysregulation, and substance use can create diagnostic uncertainty and introduce important clinical and governance considerations.

This presentation will explore practical approaches to assessment and safe prescribing for adults with ADHD in community settings. It will provide a concise overview of the current evidence base for stimulant and non-stimulant treatments, while highlighting limitations of the literature in populations with significant psychosocial complexity. The session will outline general principles for risk assessment, monitoring, documentation, and shared-care collaboration, emphasising proportionate decision-making and patient-centred care.

In addition, the discussion will examine how individual prescribing decisions sit within wider organisational systems. Community psychiatrists frequently operate at the interface between clinical need, resource constraints, multidisciplinary dynamics, and governance frameworks. Clear clinical boundaries, transparent criteria for treatment initiation or deferral, and structured monitoring processes are essential for ensuring both patient safety and professional defensibility.

The aim of this session is to integrate clinical evidence with practical, system-aware decision-making principles that can be adapted across diverse service contexts. Attendees will gain a structured framework to support safe, ethical and sustainable ADHD care within complex community environments.