

French Kids Do Have ADHD: An Interview

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/here-there-and-everywhere/201209/french-kids-do-have-adhd-interview>

Moliere described [ADHD](#) in his play *L'Étourdi ou Les Contretemps (The Blunderer)* in 1655. However, the concept of ADHD, or "Trouble déficit de l'attention/hyperactivité"(TDAH), as a serious disorder is still not fully accepted in France. However, ADHD impacts the functioning of 3.5% of the population of France (Lecendreau, et al. 2011). In addition, ADHD is just as prevalent in other countries as it is in the U.S. (Faraone, et al. 2003).

I interviewed Elias Sarkis MD, a board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrist and Distinguished Fellow of the American [Psychiatric](#) Association, to learn more about the prevalence of ADHD in France. Dr. Sarkis lived in France for 10 years, and graduated from medical school at Universite de Lille in Lille, France. He is now the medical director of Sarkis Family Psychiatry and Sarkis Clinical Trials in Gainesville, Florida. His website is www.sarkisfamilypsychiatry.com ([link is external](#)).

Dr. Sarkis returns to France on a regular basis. He said that ADHD does most certainly exist in France. Not only are there clinical studies showing the prevalence of ADHD in France, but Dr. Sarkis also has a friend, a psychiatrist, whose child has ADHD. His friend's daughter had lifelong difficulties in school, had an unplanned [pregnancy](#), and then dropped out of school. Her mother is now watching her child so she can return to school.

Dr. Sarkis said that in France there is a "strong negative cultural belief against [medication](#)" for children with psychiatric disorders. However, he said, children with ADHD continue to suffer the consequences of the disorder. Regarding the impact of undiagnosed and unmedicated ADHD in France, Dr. Sarkis said, "the reality is that there are French kids in prison, a high rate of tobacco use, and kids dropping out of school".

Dr. Sarkis said that if a French child with ADHD receives "excellent [parenting](#), high structure, and clear expectations from parents" it can mitigate behaviors, However, it is "at the price of the child experiencing increased [anxiety](#) and internalizing problems". For those children who are not able to receive excellent parenting and high structure, ADHD behaviors can be extremely impairing.

In France it is difficult for parents to get an evaluation and treatment for their ADHD child. It takes 8 months for a child to get an appointment with a specialist, and it can take another 8 months before a child is prescribed medication (Getin, 2011).

Fortunately, Dr. Sarkis said, the concept of ADHD as a serious, treatable disorder is gaining strength in France. Parents are learning more about ADHD via the Internet, and there are more centers being established to help treat this debilitating disorder.

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