Overrepresentation of Adopted Adolescents in a Hospital Based Gender Dysphoria Clinic

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Introduction

• We noted an increase in adopted children presenting to Gender Clinic at Boston Children’s Hospital
  – First reported by Zucker and Bradley (1998): 7.8% of referred male assigned patients had been adopted (compared to 1.49% rate of adoption in Ontario)\(^1\)
  – One case report of a child adopted at age 16 months with gender dysphoria and attachment disorder\(^2\)

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Methods

• Data from 184 adolescents presenting to GeMS clinic at Boston Children’s Hospital (2007-2015) was reviewed
  – Charts reviewed manually
  – Assessment notes were reviewed for adoption status and sex assigned at birth
  – For adopted patients, other information was extracted:
    • Age at adoption
    • Birthplace

• State and national census data was reviewed regarding population-level adoption rates
Results

• 15/184 patients were adopted (8.2%)
  – US adoption Rate is 2.4%*
  – Massachusetts adoption rate is 2.3%*
  – Rate of adoptees presenting to our clinic was higher than expected based on US and Massachusetts census data (p<0.001)

*US Census, 2010
Results

• Of the 15 adopted children
  – Age at assessment: 9.5 to 17.2 years (mean 13.6 years)
  – 8/15 assigned male at birth
  – 7/15 assigned female at birth
    • No significant sex difference (p=0.43)
Discussion:

• Reason for overrepresentation?
  – True difference
    • Difference related to identity development differences in adopted children?
  – Not true difference
    • Increase in acceptance of gender identity differences in adoptive parents?
    • Increase in access to tertiary care center by adoptive families?