



## Student Scribes

Alida emphasises that building trust and fostering a relationship with community members is an integral part of their implementation. They do this by working with and empowering the community members and using local community members to help them in the development and construction of the schools.

Another obstacle their organisation faces is the lack of qualified teachers in the communities where they develop these schools. New Schools of H.O.P.E. rolls out a curriculum to all of the schools with which they are involved, to ensure that children are on track with the national curriculum, and the shortage of qualified teachers makes the implementation of the curriculum difficult.

They overcame this hurdle by investing in training local educators, therefore equipping them to provide quality education and still empow-

ering community members to take ownership of these projects.

An ongoing concern for the organisation is a shortage of sufficient funding and resources for both current and future projects. Without financial security, the organisation is impacted in various ways, from the projects being sustainable to being able to implement new infrastructures.

The organisation is overcoming this by staying committed to finding donations, partnerships and stakeholders who can ensure that the programme continues to provide quality education opportunities.

This article was specifically written to emphasise the positive impact that NGOs/NPOs can have on the quality of education in low-resource communities in South Africa. Equal access to education is a basic human right.

Everyone is encouraged to advocate for this right and to recog-

nise the crucial role of NGOs and NPOs in the development of early childhood education programmes. ●

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# Early intervention for ADHD

by Tarien Buys

**ATTENTION DEFICIT** hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is the most common psychiatric disorder in children, affecting 8–9% of school learners worldwide (Crouch and Alers, 2014; Parekh, 2022). The DSM-5 describes ADHD as a condition that presents with patterns of behaviour that cause performance issues in various contexts and environments.

The DSM-5 further explains that the symptoms are divided into inattention and hyperactivity with impulsivity. Children with ADHD, therefore, struggle with sustaining attention to a specific task, often have difficulty organising tasks, lose personal belongings, fail to complete tasks and do not seem to listen when spoken to directly (Crouch and Alers, 2014).

This disorder is ongoing and requires continuous management throughout the child's life. These

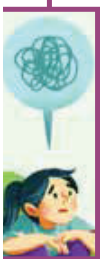
challenges can significantly impact their daily life, including participation in school, activities of daily living, play, and social interaction.

According to Stark et al., 2022, 5% of children in South Africa are diagnosed with ADHD. Health professionals and parents at Daspoort Poli Clinic have expressed concern about the high number of children diagnosed with ADHD, however, the clinic does not have an occupational therapist to provide the necessary support. This often leads to late diagnosis and delayed intervention for the children. As a result, parents have reported that their children struggle in their school, social, and home environments. Some parents at the clinic even expressed that their children get suspended from school due to them presenting with severe hyperactivity and inability to follow instructions.

Final year OT students are placed at Daspoort Poli Clinic for work-integrated learning (WIL), however, students do not provide individual intervention for children at the clinic.

While some children are seen during group therapy sessions at the preschools where students are placed, the lack of consistent individual intervention remains a significant gap. Other health professionals, such as speech and language therapy students, provide individual interventions, when necessary, but these services are mostly driven by students, meaning that once WIL is completed, the service is no longer available. This highlights the critical need for a full-time occupational therapist at the clinic, as consistent intervention is vital for children with ADHD to thrive.

The Daspoort community faces further challenges due to the lack ➔





# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



## What is ADHD?

ADHD is a mental health condition that can cause unusual levels of hyperactivity, problems with attention and impulsive behaviors.

ADHD can be diagnosed in children and adults.

## Signs & Symptoms

### Behavioural:

- Hyperactivity
- Aggression
- Fidgeting
- Excitability

### Cognitive :

- Forgetfulness
- Short attention span
- Problems with paying attention

### Mood:

- Anger/ frustration
- Mood swings
- Boredom
- Excitement

## How to manage ADHD :



### Medical

- Medical intervention
- Medication
- Co-morbidities



### School environment

- Reduce environmental distractions
- Specific seating



### Home environment

- Good routine
- Minimise screen time
- Active play outside
- Good nutrition dense diet
- Avoid sugary treats and drinks

## ADHD Treatment

**ADHD treatment usually consists of a combination of therapy and medication intervention.**

### Therapy:

To manage symptoms and improve functioning at home and at school.

### Medication:

Children and families can alternate between medications according to the effectiveness of the treatment and tolerability of the dosage.

## Occupational Therapists:

Kalafong Provincial Tertiary Hospital

otkalafong@gmail.com  
012 318 6697

## Role of Occupational Therapy

Improving executive functioning skills

Improving attention and focus

Sensory integration

Developing social skills

Promoting self-regulation

Supporting fine and gross motor skills

Facilitating Academic success

Family and caregiver education

Modifying environment and tasks

Developing coping strategies

## References

- <https://www.healthline.com/health/adhd>
- <https://sensoryhealth.org/>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/adhd/diagnosis-treatment/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/adhd/treatment/>
- <https://www.occupationaltherapy.com/articles/supporting-children-with-adhd-through-occupational-therapy/>

## ADHD Treatment

### BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

#### Parent Training:

Strategies to manage their child's behavior, reinforce positive behaviors, and provide consistent discipline.

#### Behavioral Interventions at School:

Implement structured routines, provide immediate feedback, and create tailored behavior plans.

#### Social Skills Training:

Helps children learn appropriate social interactions, such as taking turns, sharing, and responding to peer feedback.

### MEDICATION

**Stimulants:** Help increase attention and decrease impulsivity and hyperactivity.

**Non-Stimulants:** Are used if stimulants are ineffective or cause side effects.

**Monitor and adjust:** Regular follow-ups to monitor effectiveness and adjust dosages as needed.

### EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

#### Individualized Education Program (IEP):

A plan developed with the school to provide accommodations.

#### 504 Plan:

Another form of educational support that provides accommodations based on the child's needs.

*The ADHD awareness pamphlet distributed to attendees*

of resources and access to multi-disciplinary team (MDT) members. While hospitals like Kalafong and Pretoria West Hospital provide more comprehensive, full-time allied health services, the distance and logistical challenges make it difficult for families to access these resources. Parents are often faced with the burden of taking children out of school for sessions, which can disrupt their

education. The policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) is intended to assist in these situations, but challenges remain in its implementation, making it difficult for families to navigate the system and access the support their children need. (Hess, 2020)

This presents a challenge in the Daspoort community where children struggle to function optimally in their daily activities. Additionally,

the parents have limited knowledge and resources for managing ADHD. According to Phoenix Recovery Centre, untreated ADHD in children can increase the risk of developing mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. This is due to ADHD symptoms like impulsivity and difficulty focusing and concentrating, which leads to feelings of frustration and irritability. ➔





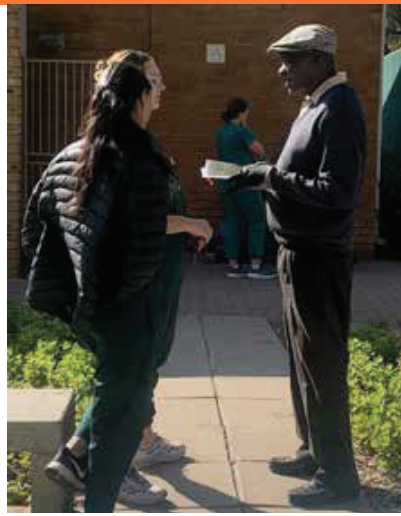
## Student Scribes

When left untreated, symptoms will have a definite impact on their daily occupational performance and participation (ThePhoenixRC, 2022). This poses a great risk to the Daspoort community and the possible future of the children, however, with early intervention there will be improved outcomes, reduced stress, and better quality of life. (CPD Online, n.d.).

There is a great need to address ADHD in disadvantaged and under-resourced communities. Urgent interventions, including, raising awareness and improving the referral systems and access to resources are essential to improve children's wellbeing and quality of life. Students are encouraged to regularly have health awareness events during their work integrated learning to address concerns in the community. Health awareness events such as those focused on raising awareness about ADHD, may address the signs and symptoms, potential treatment options, lifestyle adjustments, and referral systems to increase the likelihood of early intervention for ADHD.

In line with this goal, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, a group of fourth year occupational therapy students from the University of Pretoria, organised an ADHD Health Awareness Day at Daspoort Poli Clinic. Dr. Botha, a key health professional at the clinic, highlighted a concern over the growing number of ADHD diagnoses and specifically requested the ADHD awareness presentation to address the community's urgent need for intervention. This initiative was designed to inform the community about ADHD's signs and symptoms, treatment options, and the role of occupational therapy in managing ADHD.

One week prior to the event, promotional posters were displayed at Daspoort Poli Clinic, and health care workers assisted in spreading the word to the community. On the day of the event, an information booth was set up on the



*Isabelle Botha and Tasmiyah Amodjee engage with a parent to raise awareness.*

clinic grounds, accessible to anyone visiting the clinic or attending specifically for the health awareness day. The booth attracted parents with children with ADHD as well as health care workers from other clinics. Additionally, an awareness talk was conducted with the clinic's healthcare staff, which included an interactive question and answer session to address questions and promote understanding around ADHD and related health issues.

The occupational therapy students, supported by two supervisors, were present to provide visitors with essential information. As it was a walk-through event, the students engaged with each visitor individually allowing for one-on-one conversations tailored to each visitor's questions and needs. Information pamphlets, created by students Tarien Buys, Isabelle Botha, Bianca Meyer, Karla de Wet and Tasmiyah Amodjee and reviewed by their supervisors, were distributed. These pamphlets contained comprehensive information on ADHD's signs, symptoms, treatment options and the contributions of occupational therapy in ADHD.

In conclusion, the ADHD Health Awareness Day at Daspoort Poli Clinic was a success, receiving positive feedback from attendees. One parent arranged for the students to provide a similar awareness talk at her workplace, Eljada Huis Uitreik, a charity organisation, further expanding the impact of the awareness day's initiative. Several



parents also expressed gratitude for the valuable information provided. Overall, the day was a success. ●

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