Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common, unremitting, and controversial childhood disorders, which affects between 1% and 7% of New Zealand children. It leads to impairments in the individual's key life activities, including social relations, academic, family, and vocational functioning, self-sufficiency, as well as adherence to social regulations, norms, and laws. Teachers play a central role in the referral, diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring of students with ADHD. Research examining teachers' knowledge of ADHD however, has led to some uncertainty as to whether teachers have the level of knowledge about the disorder needed to support ADHD learners. The present study examined the knowledge and perceptions of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder held by primary school teachers in New Zealand and sought to determine whether teacher characteristics, such as demographic variables and experiences of students with ADHD, are associated with teachers' knowledge of ADHD.

Questionnaire data were collected from teachers across New Zealand. Eighty-four primary school teachers completed a postal survey containing questions about demographic information and the Knowledge Of Attention Deficit Disorders Scale (KADDS). Results indicated that teachers answered an average of 35% of questions about the nature of ADHD correctly on the KADDS. Teachers' scored significantly higher in terms of knowledge about the symptoms and diagnosis of ADHD that on items relating to the treatment and nature, causes and prognosis of ADHD. All teachers in the present study reported that they believed ADHD impacts on the educational experiences of students diagnosed with the disorder. Most teachers had received no pre-service or in-service training about ADHD, and 90% of teachers wanted more training on ADHD. The majority of teacher demographic characteristics were unrelated or only weakly related to teachers' knowledge of ADHD. However, the number of students with ADHD teachers had taught, participation in an individual behaviour plan (IBP), and participation in an individual education plan (IEP), were significantly and moderately related to higher KADDS total and Symptoms/Diagnosis scores. The results of this study suggest that New Zealand primary school teachers do not have the level of knowledge about the disorder required to effectively participate in the referral, diagnosis, treatment, or monitoring of students with ADHD. Implications for educational psychology practice and directions for future research are discussed. Strengths and limitations of the study are also considered.