

POSTER PRESENTATION

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EUROLIGHT project: impact of primary headache disorders from a population-based study conducted in Pavia

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Introduction

Headache disorders, including migraine and tension-type headache, are very common in the general population but there is very little recognition of their public health impact [1]. In Italy, there are relatively few studies on the prevalence of primary headaches. We conducted a survey in the population of the Pavia province, in Northern Italy, which is a part of a global project performed at the European Union level, the Eurolight Project (<http://www.eurolight-online.eu>), to estimate the impact of headaches using a validated tool (the Eurolight questionnaire).

Material and methods

The Eurolight questionnaire, including 103 items, was distributed to a stratified sample (n=3500) of the adult inhabitants of Pavia province, randomly selected in cooperation with Azienda Sanitaria Locale (ASL). Of these questionnaires, 500 were returned completed correctly.

Results

487 questionnaires were considered for the analysis (51% by women and 49% by men). Nearly 80% of our study population reported to suffer from episodic headaches in their life and 91.7% had episodic headaches in the last year. Medication Overuse Headache (MOH) was diagnosed in 1.9%. Up to 80.0% of responders suffering from headache never received a diagnosis by a doctor and only 2.4% of them were taking preventative medication. Almost 12% of headache sufferers reported a moderate or severe negative interference of pain in many aspects of the life (education, career and earnings, family planning).

Headache influenced the mood state and there was a correlation between the monthly headache frequency and anxiety or depression symptoms. In MOH patients the presence of anxiety and depression disorders was indeed very high.

Conclusions

Despite a high prevalence of primary headaches in Italian adult population, the majority of affected people are primarily self-treating without receiving the advice of health professionals. Education of patients and health carers should be a high priority issue in public health.

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