



A STUDY OF PATTERN OF PRIMARY HEADACHES IN NEUROLOGY OUTPATIENT SETTING AT A TERTIARY CARE TEACHING CENTRE IN INDIA

Neurology

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ABSTRACT

Headache accounts for a major percentage of patients presenting to Neurology outpatient settings across the world. Primary headaches are the most common and prevalent causes of headache. Almost all of these can be diagnosed in outpatient settings with the help of a good history and examination. Major primary headaches are migraine and tension type headache. Although very common, there are only few studies which address the issue of classifying these important headache disorders. This study was done to study about the pattern of distribution of primary headaches in the outpatient settings at a tertiary care teaching centre in South India.

KEYWORDS

Primary headache, migraine, tension type headache

INTRODUCTION:

Headache is one of the most common neurological disorders¹ and it accounts for multiple visits to general physicians and neurologists. Primary headaches cause a significant disability with reduced efficiency and quality of life with lost workdays². Only few patients receive appropriate diagnosis and adequate care. Out of all, migraine and tension-type headache are the most prevalent primary headache disorders. Overall, the current global prevalence of primary headache is 47%, 10% for migraine, 38% for tension-type headache and 3% for chronic daily headache^{3,4}.

The lifetime prevalence rates are higher: in men, 93% for headache of any kind, 8% for migraine, and 69% for tension-type headache. In women, lifetime prevalence is 99% for headache of any kind, 25% for migraine, and 88% for Tension-Type Headache (TTH)^{4,5}. The other common primary headache consists of Trigeminal Autonomic Cephalalgia (TAC) while some uncommon ones include hypnic headache, nummular headache and new daily persistent headache among others. Despite of being quite common in prevalence, there have been very few studies on the pattern of primary headaches in the society. This study was done to identify and study the prevalence of distribution of primary headaches in the Neurology outpatient setting.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To study the pattern of distribution of various primary headache types who present to Neurology department on outpatient basis.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

This was a retrospective observational study done over one year from 1st March 2019 to 29th February 2020 on the patients presenting to a tertiary care teaching hospital in South India. All patients more than 20 years of age, who were diagnosed to have primary headache according to International Classification of Headache Disorders (ICHD-3)⁶ were included in the study. The types of primary headache were then classified.

RESULTS:

122 patients were diagnosed to be having primary headache. Out of these, 46(37.7%) were males and 76(62.3%) were females. Most common age group was 21-30 years followed by 31-40 years (Table 1). Most common primary headache type was TTH seen in 56(45.90%) patients. It was followed by migraine in 36(29.50%) patients. Mixed TTH and migraine was seen in 20(16.39%) patients. 6(4.91%) patients had TAC while 2(1.63%) patients each of hypnic headache and nummular headache were seen (Table 2). Other patients who had primary headache along with some other secondary headache were not included.

Table 1: Age of presentation

Age of the patient	Total patients (%)
21-30 years	54 (44.26%)
31- 40 years	38 (31.14%)
41-50 years	20 (16.39%)
>50 years	10 (8.19%)

Table 2 : Types of primary headache

Type of headache	Total patients (%)
Tension Type Headache (TTH)	56 (45.90%)
Migraine	36 (29.50%)
Mixed TTH and migraine	20 (16.39%)
Trigeminal Autonomic Cephalalgia (TAC)	6 (4.91%)
Hypnic headache	2 (1.63%)
Nummular headache	2 (1.63%)

DISCUSSION:

Headache disorders are amongst the most common nervous system disorders all around the world. Primary headache disorders constitute the vast majority of headache disorders, with migraine and tension-type headache (TTH) being the most prevalent. TTH affects 60-80% of the population while migraine has a prevalence of 15% (male 7.6%, female 18.3%)^{3,4}. Migraine also has a variety of presentations and manifests as migraine without aura or migraine with aura. These auras can be visual/auditory or even other types of sensory auras. A few patients have features which are common in between migraine and tension-type headache and generally classified as mixed vascular headaches. Medication-overuse headache (MOH) is a secondary headache disorder and it often co-exists with primary headache disorders, and is often described with them. It usually occurs after prolonged habitual intake of analgesics for one or the other type of primary headaches. Trigeminal Autonomic Cephalalgias comprise the other majority of primary headaches and it consists of cluster headache/ paroxysmal hemicrania/ hemicrania continua and other rare forms like SUNCT or SUNA. These are one of the most disabling headaches. Other rare forms of primary headaches include nummular headache and hypnic headache amongst others.

Careful history taking and physical examination remain the most important part in the assessment of the patient with headache. A thorough history should investigate the onset of headache, location, quality, and radiation of pain, associated symptoms experienced before and during the headache, associated medical conditions, medication use, recent trauma or interventions. Though very common, almost all primary headache disorders, if properly and timely identified, are completely treatable. Efforts should be made for early identification and proper addressal to prevent a lot of DALYs lost for millions of people suffering from this condition.

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