

Anxiety comorbidity in chronic daily headache sufferers

Is there a difference versus other primary headaches?

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Background

Eurolight is the first independent data collection on headaches at EU level focusing on a holistic, patient-driven and scientifically validated approach. The first results of this study are now available for one of the smallest countries of Europe: **Luxembourg** (467'000 inhabitants). The work data presented here analyses the influence of headache on anxiety in a national population sample.

Objective

To measure anxiety in different headache types with regard to the frequency of headache using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS).

Methods

A self-administered questionnaire (in French, German, Portuguese and English), including HADS, was sent to 6498 individuals aged 18-65 years selected from the general population of Luxembourg, using a random process without repetitions, stratified for age, sex and living area. The severity of the anxiety is categorized as: 0-7 no anxious state, 8-10 doubtful anxious state and more than 10 as **certain anxious state**. Headache types are categorized according to the IHS classification.

Results

Our sample is composed of 1833 respondents (40.5±12.7 years, 58% female).

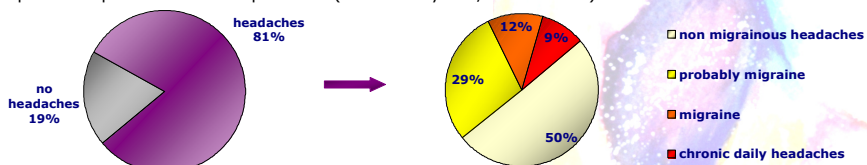


Fig1: Description of types of headache

Anxiety scores are the lowest in respondents without headaches and the highest in chronic daily headaches (fig 2). There is a clear relation between anxiety score and type of headache ($p < 0.0001$) (fig 2). Headache frequency is significantly associated with anxiety ($p < 0.0001$). The certain anxiety state is more prevalent in chronic daily headaches (40%) than in other types of headache (fig 2).

Subjects with a headache frequency of >10 days/month suffer twice more from anxiety than people with a headache frequency of 1-3 days/month (39% vs. 18%) (fig 3).

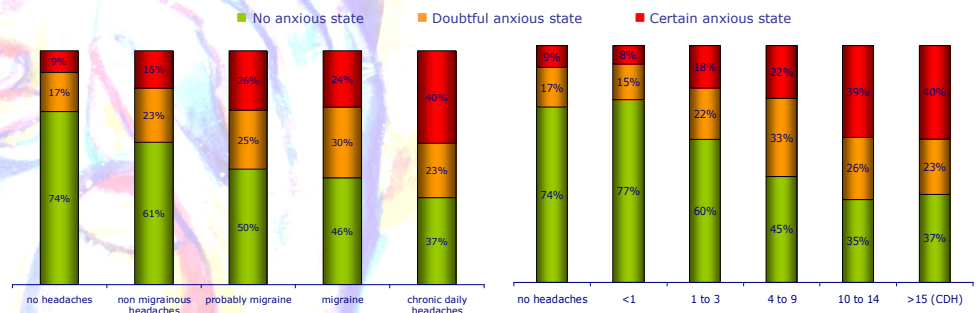


Fig2: Distribution of anxious state by types of headaches Fig3: Distribution of anxious state by headache frequency

In all headache groups except for migraine ($p = 0.23$) the frequency of headache is significantly associated with severity of anxiety ($p < 0.0001$) (fig 4).

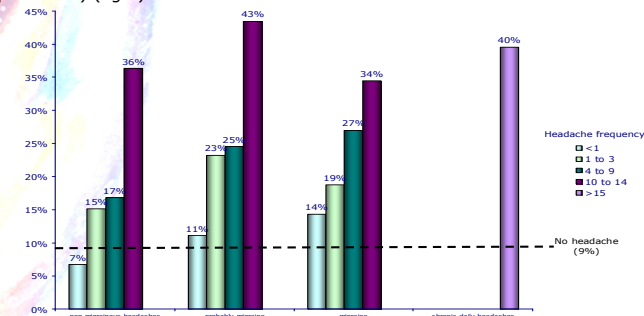


Fig4: Certain anxious state by type of headache and headache frequency

Conclusions

Our population based study indicates that there is a statistically significant comorbidity with anxiety in people suffering of headaches. There is also a relation between frequency of headaches and anxiety. The described relation between frequency and severity of anxiety showed that certain anxiety was associated with higher headache frequency. Headache diagnosis seems to play a less important role in prediction of anxiety than the frequency of headache.

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