

**Chronic migraine in the population:
Burden, diagnosis, and satisfaction with treatment**

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FROM ABSTRACT

Objective:

To evaluate the disability profile and patterns of treatment and health care use for chronic migraine in the general population, in contrast to episodic migraine.

Methods:

We identified 24,000 headache sufferers, drawn from more than 165,000 individuals representative of the US population. This sample has been followed up with annual surveys using validated questionnaires for the diagnosis of episodic migraine and chronic migraine. As a part of the survey, subjects were asked to report the specific medications currently used for their most severe headaches, as well as level of satisfaction with treatment.

Results:

Our sample consisted of 520 individuals with chronic migraine and 9,424 with episodic migraine. Over a 3-month period, more than half of the individuals with chronic migraine missed at least 5 days of household work, compared with 24.3% of those with episodic migraine.

The majority of the chronic migraine sufferers (87.6%) had previously sought care to discuss their headaches with a health professional.

Migraine-specific acute treatments were used by 31.6% of respondents with chronic migraine and 24.8% with episodic migraine.

Around 48% of the individuals with chronic migraine were satisfied with their acute therapies.

Just 33.3% of those with chronic migraine were currently using preventive medications.

Conclusion:

Chronic migraine is more disabling than episodic migraine in the population. Although most individuals with chronic migraine sought medical care for this disorder, the majority did not receive specific acute or preventive medications.

THESE AUTHORS ALSO NOTE:

Most chronic migraine sufferers (87.6%) had previously sought care to discuss their headaches with a health professional, and 73.6% had at least one consultation over the past year.

The professionals ever consulted for chronic migraine headache were:

Family practice doctor	80.1%
Neurologist	41.6%
Chiropractors	36.2%
Headache or pain doctors	26.9%

13.9% of the chronic migraine patients had rebound headaches or medication overuse headaches.

Opioids are used by 28.6% of chronic migraine individuals, for a mean of 14.4 days per month.

One or more over-the-counter medications are used by 82.6% of chronic migraine individuals for a mean of 15.9 days per month.

NSAIDs were used by 63.1% of the sample, with ibuprofen (45.2% of NSAID use), naproxen (26.2%), and aspirin (23.6%) being the most common, for an average of 14.8 days per month.

Acetaminophen was used by 45.3%.

Nutraceuticals were frequently reported used, the most common were:

Magnesium	10.6%
Feverfew	10.1%
Riboflavin	9.6%

"Nutraceuticals were associated with satisfaction levels ranging from 40% (magnesium) to 58% (feverfew). They were well tolerated."

DISCUSSION

Chronic migraine is a disabling form of primary headache. It is a disabling, underdiagnosed, unrecognized, and undertreated disorder.

"Most chronic migraine sufferers treat their headache exacerbations with nonspecific migraine medications. Although most consider their medications well tolerated, 'a sizable proportion are dissatisfied with their acute medicines'."

KEY POINTS FROM DAN MURPHY

- 1) Chronic migraine is a disabling form of primary headache. It is a disabling, underdiagnosed, unrecognized, and undertreated disorder.
- 2) "Most chronic migraine sufferers treat their headache exacerbations with nonspecific migraine medications. Although most consider their medications well tolerated, 'a sizable proportion are dissatisfied with their acute medicines'."
- 3) 36.2% of chronic migraine patients consulted chiropractors, the third most consulted professional.
- 4) The professionals consulted for chronic migraine headache were:

Family practice doctor	80.1%
Neurologist	41.6%
Chiropractors	36.2%
Headache or pain doctors	26.9%
- 5) 13.9% of the chronic migraine patients had rebound headaches or medication overuse headaches.
- 6) Opioids are used by 28.6% of chronic migraine individuals, for a mean of 14.4 days per month.
- 7) One or more over-the-counter medications are used by 82.6% of chronic migraine individuals for a mean of 15.9 days per month.
- 8) NSAIDs were used by 63.1% of the sample, with ibuprofen (45.2% of NSAID use), naproxen (26.2%), and aspirin (23.6%) being the most common, for an average of 14.8 days per month.
- 9) Acetaminophen was used by 45.3%.
- 10) Nutraceuticals were frequently reported used, the most common were:

Magnesium	10.6%
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- 11) "Nutraceuticals were associated with satisfaction levels ranging from 40% (magnesium) to 58% (feverfew). They were well tolerated."