



More than 30 million sick days per year and costs in the billions: migraines weigh heavily on careers, economies and budgets

Migraines pose a serious social burden for sufferers, the public purse and the wider economy. This was the conclusion drawn by two new studies presented at the Congress of the European Academy of Neurology in Lisbon. Depression and anxiety are leading to increased absenteeism in the workplace. Experts are calling for more investment in migraine research.

Lisbon, 17 June 2018 – At the 4th Congress of the European Academy of Neurology (EAN) in Lisbon a pair of new studies confirm the true cost of migraine – to individuals, society and businesses. A French study looked at the socio-economic impact of the condition. In a survey of more than 7,700 people – a representative sample of the general population – fully 3.8 percent indicated that they experienced severe migraines on at least eight days of the month. “Two-thirds of those were women, and the average age of those affected was 41, meaning that migraines significantly affect people at the peak of their careers, and who have families to provide for. These regular attacks represent a serious problem as far as keeping their jobs is concerned,” confirmed the study author Dr Guillaume Leiba (Paris). In the current study, severe migraine patients reported missing 33 working days per year as a result of their condition. This translates into a cost to society of some EUR 3.8 billion. Migraine also has an impact on patients’ social environment: 14 percent of those asked indicated that family members had to adjust their working hours as a result of patients’ migraine headaches. The study also quantified the financial burden placed on sufferers: 58 percent reported an average monthly cost of more than EUR 30 per month for non-reimbursed medicines. 43 percent spent more than EUR 50 each month on other, non-pharmaceutical therapies. Despite the high level of public and private spending associated with the condition, quality of life for migraine patients remains far from satisfactory. More than three quarters suffer from sleeping disorders and benefited less from their free time than the migraine-free population.

Increased absenteeism due to depression and anxiety

A Swiss study, also presented at the EAN Congress in Lisbon, obtained even more detailed results regarding absenteeism in the workplace: a group of 700 working migraine patients reported losing an average of 32 days per year as a result of their study – a similar rate to that reported in the French study. But there were significant differences depending on the specific type of headache, according to study author Francois Cadiou (Singapore): “With an average of more than 56 working days missed per year, patients with chronic migraine had the highest rate of absenteeism. People with episodic migraine were unable to go to work on 33 days of the year, while those with low-frequency episodic migraine took an average of 15 days off as a result of their condition.” Another finding revealed an important point of departure for preventive measures: the number of sick days was not always constant. In fact, the total steadily increased, and with it the amount of medication taken if patients indicated ‘anxiety’ or ‘depression’ as a symptom or trigger at least once within the 28-day observation period. In light of the outcomes presented, experts at the EAN Congress have

issued a call for increased investment in migraine research and prevention, citing the advantages to society as a whole.

Both studies were funded by Novartis Pharma.

Source: Abstracts 4th EAN Congress Lisbon 2018: EPO1050 G. Leiba et al: Socio-economic impact of severe migraine in France: study in patients with at least 8 days of headache per month; EPO3031 N. Paris et al: Evaluating the impact of migraine on work productivity in Switzerland using self-reported data from the Migraine Buddy© application.

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