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Epilepsy and Headache: A cross-sectional study in 125 patients with temporal lobe epilepsy

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Introduction: Headache is a common comorbidity in epilepsy, but remains poorly understood and overlooked.

Objective: To establish relations between epilepsy and headache and evaluate patterns of treatment in these patients.

Methods: Cross-sectional study of 125 patients with temporal lobe epilepsy. Patients were divided in three groups according with the age of epilepsy onset. We study in these patients headache and its characteristics.

Results: The mean age of patients was 44.5 years-old (SD \pm 11.3) and 73 of them (58.4%) were women. Seizures were classified as focal without impairment of consciousness in 31 patients (20%), generalized in 92 (59.4%), and focal with impairment of consciousness in 32 (20.6%). One hundred and two (81.6%) of our patients with epilepsy had headache. Migraine was present in 55 (44%) of them. Headache was significantly more common in patients that started epilepsy at younger ages ($p < 0.05$) and the frequency of headache decreased progressively according with the increase of age of epilepsy onset. Seventy-eight patients (77.5%) use analgesics for pain treatment and 24 (30.5%) of them used it in a self-medicated manner.

Conclusions: In our cohort, headache occurs in two-thirds of patients with temporal lobe epilepsy. Headache was more frequent when epilepsy started at younger ages. The treatment of headache in epilepsy has been overlooked and self-medication is common in these patients. Patients with epilepsy and headache use analgesics in a self-medicated and non appropriated manner. Neurologists should be aware that headache is a very common comorbidity in epilepsy, is frequently overlooked and have been inappropriately treated in these patients.

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