MIGRAINE PREVALENCE, DISEASE BURDEN, AND THE NEED FOR PREVENTIVE THERAPY

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Objectives: 1) To reassess the prevalence of migraine in the United States; 2) to assess patterns of migraine treatment in the population; and 3) to contrast current patterns of preventive treatment use with recommendations for use from an expert headache panel. **Methods:** A validated self-administered headache questionnaire was mailed to 120,000 US households, representative of the US population. Migraineurs were identified according to the criteria of the second edition of the International Classification of Headache Disorders. Guidelines for preventive medication use were developed by a panel of headache experts. Criteria for consider or offer prevention were based on headache frequency and impairment. **Results:** We assessed 162,576 individuals aged 12 years or older. The 1-year period prevalence for migraine was 11.7% (17.1% in women and 5.6% in men). Prevalence peaked in middle life and was lower in adolescents and those older than age 60 years. Of all migraineurs, 31.3% had an attack frequency of three or more per month, and 53.7% reported severe impairment or the need for bed rest. In total, 25.7% met criteria for “offer prevention,” and in an additional 13.1%, prevention should be considered. Just 13.0% reported current use of daily preventive migraine medication. **Conclusions:** Compared with previous studies, the epidemiologic profile of migraine has remained stable in the United States during the past 15 years. More than one in four migraineurs are candidates for preventive therapy, and a substantial proportion of those who might benefit from prevention do not receive it.

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Comment from Robert A. Gross, MD, PhD, FAAN, Editor-in-Chief: An assessment of the outcomes of migraine, and thereby a strong argument in favor of preventive treatment.

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