

Study reviews health risks, economic burden of migraine

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A new study published in *Value in Health* reviews the economic burden of migraine in the U.S. and recent clinical findings of the health risks of this neurological condition. This study traces the history of economic articles published on migraine using the PubMed MEDLINE database and archival searches of relevant articles to identify possible health risks associated with migraines that warrant further study.

Migraine affects millions of individuals worldwide. Sufferers experience substantial decreases in functioning and productivity, results which in turn translate into diminished quality of life for individuals, financial burdens for health care systems and substantial lost work time that impacts individuals, employers, and societies alike. Migraine is a condition most prevalent in individuals between the ages of 25 and 55, generally the most productive years of a person's life.

Migraine is often perceived as a condition that imposes a minimal burden on society and the health care system. This misperception persists in part because the disorder is episodic and rarely causes long-term physical disability. Because it is under-diagnosed and under-treated, analyses of claims data underestimate the condition's prevalence and economic impact.

Recent clinical studies suggest that migraine may be a progressive disease with cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and long-term neurologic effects. Suffering from migraines may also be a risk factor for brain lesions. Additionally, studies following those who suffer from migraine

with aura (sensory, motor or visual disturbances that can precede or accompany the headache) have shown these individuals to be twice as likely as the general population to develop major cardiovascular disease and suffer stroke. If such findings are confirmed, treatments, approaches and economic evaluations of migraine treatment may require major reconsideration.

Epidemiologic studies have recently indicated that 4 percent to 5 percent of the general population suffers from chronic daily migraine headache, a condition characterized by 15 or more headache days per month, and that transformed migraine—the transformation of episodic migraine to the chronic form of the disorder—accounts for approximately half of these patients.

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