



## Correspondence

### Analgesic abuse headache: risk factors and causes of poor adherence in the detox process

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Dear Editor,

Medication overuse headache is considered a secondary headache developed in patients with previous primary headache. Although there are well-established diagnostic criteria in ICHD-3<sup>1</sup>, this condition involves points of divergence among headache specialist. In this letter, I would like to criticize the use of the term abuse for this condition.

The terms overuse and abuse cannot be applied synonymously. Abuse is related to Substance Use Disorders (SUD) diagnosed according to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 (DSM-5).<sup>2</sup> The term “abuse” span a wide variety of problems arising from substance use, and cover 11 different criteria:

#### Keywords:

Medication overuse headache  
Substance use disorders

1. Taking the substance in larger amounts or for longer than you are meant to.
2. Wanting to cut down or stop using the substance but not managing to.
3. Spending a lot of time getting, using, or recovering from use of the substance.
4. Cravings and urges to use the substance.
5. Not managing to do what you should at work, home, or school because of substance use.
6. Continuing to use, even when it causes problems in relationships.
7. Giving up important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of substance use.
8. Using substances again and again, even when it puts you in danger.
9. Continuing to use, even when you know you have a physical or psychological problem that could have been caused or made worse by the substance.
10. Needing more of the substance to get the effect you want (tolerance).
11. Development of withdrawal symptoms, which can be relieved by taking more of the substance.

As for the term “overuse”, although the terminology is widely used, there is no clear definition. The current diagnostic criteria for medication overuse headache (MOH) is based on an arbitrary limit of medication intake, this definition was based on expert opinion as there is no evidence based on clinical studies.

Thus, term “abuse” cannot, according to its definition, be used in the condition of headache caused by frequent use of medication.

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### References

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