



Headache in patients with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus: a case-control study

Igor de Oliveira, Henrique de Ataíde Mariz, Angela Luzia Branco Pinto Duarte, Pedro Augusto Sampaio Rocha Filho

Universidade Federal De Pernambuco, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil.

Introduction

Headache is a symptom frequently reported by patients with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). However, the effect of SLE is still not well established. Objectives: To compare the prevalence and characteristics of headaches among patients with SLE and individuals without the disease and to assess whether there was a relationship between headaches and SLE activity.

Methods

This was a case-control study. Those included were examined by a neurologist and interviewed by a neurologist. Cases: patients with SLE. Controls: individuals without SLE matched for sex and age with cases. A semi-structured form, the Headache Impact Test (HIT-6), and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale were used. Disease activity was measured by a rheumatologist using the Physician Global Assessment and quantified using the modified Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Disease Activity Index (modified SLEDAI-2K).

Results

228 individuals were included, 114 in each group. The SLE group had more moderate/severe headaches than controls (OR: 3.21, 95%CI 1.41-7.29, $p = 0.005$; conditional logistic regression). Comparing patients with active SLE with those without disease activity, there was no difference in headache prevalence, type, frequency, intensity, or impact. The magnitude of SLE activity (modified SLEDAI-2K) had no statistically significant association with the impact or monthly frequency of headaches.

Conclusions

Headache is a frequent symptom of SLE, but the prevalence is similar to that of the population without the disease. Patients with SLE have a more severe headache than those without SLE, but there is no association between headache and SLE activity.

Keywords: Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, Headache, Pain