



Persistent headache and chronic daily headache after COVID-19: a prospective cohort study

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Introduction

Headache may persist beyond the acute phase of COVID-19. Little is known about the frequency and impact of this persistent headache and about the incidence of chronic daily headache (CDH).

Objective

To assess the incidence, risk factors, characteristics and impact of CDH in patients with COVID-19.

Method

This was a prospective cohort study. In the first stage, 288 patients were interviewed by telephone after the acute phase of COVID-19. Subsequently, 199 patients who presented headache were reinterviewed at least one year after COVID-19. Headaches that persisted beyond the acute phase of COVID-19 and presented frequency greater than or equal to every 45 days over the first three months were considered to be CDH.

Results

123 patients were included: 56% were women; the median age was 50 years (range: 41-58). The median length of time between the acute phase of COVID-19 and the interview was 804 days (range: 739-892). The headache persisted beyond the acute phase of COVID-19 in 52%, and 20.3% had CDH (95% CI: 13.6-28.2). Individuals who previously had headaches and who had headaches of greater intensity during the acute phase were at higher risk of developing CDH. The group with CDH included more women, greater impact of headache, more persistence of headache beyond the 120th day of COVID-19 and less throbbing headache than did the other individuals whose headache persisted.

Conclusion

Patients who had COVID-19 had high incidence of CDH, and this had a negative impact on these individuals' lives. Previous headache and greater intensity of headache were associated with higher risk of CDH.

Keywords: COVID-19, Post-Acute COVID-19 Syndrome, Headache, Headache Disorders, Secondary, New Daily Persistent Headache.