

Migraine headaches in a group of medical students at the Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi.

Abstract

A survey was carried out on 711 medical students from both the medical school and the Kenya Medical Training Centre on headaches using a closed ended questionnaire. Six hundred and twenty five (88%) of the students reported to have at least one episode of headache in the last six months. Two hundred and forty (33.8%) of these were classified as migraine using the International Headache Society case definition. Seventy (29%) had migraine with aura, the rest being migraine without aura. The mean age was 22.7 +/- 5 years with a male to female ratio of 1:1.3. The majority of the respondents (43%) had an average of two to three headache episodes per month. The major triggering factors for the headache were physical activities, emotional disturbance and studying, each occurring in 21% of the student respondents. It was reported by 43.6% of the respondents that there was a member of their nucleus family with a similar headache. Only 40% of the respondents had sought medical attention for their headache in the last one year. The main reason for not seeking medical services was self medication in 56% of those who did not attend medical services. Only 27 (11%) of the respondents were currently on medication which consisted of simple analgesics and antimalarials. There were only two students who were on specific drugs for migraine. The majority of the respondents continued to be inadequately treated despite the development of wide range of effective treatment.