



Anxiety, depression associated with Medication Overuse Headaches

The Headache Clinic

Many people suffer from the effects of Medication Overuse Headaches (MOH) and this is detrimental to our daily functioning. A new study found that mental illness such as anxiety and depression can also be associated with Medication Overuse Headaches, making this form of headache even more debilitating.

The study, recently published in European Journal of Neurology, found that nearly 50% of chronic headache sufferers also suffer from Medication Overuse Headaches, and that these patients had significantly higher headache disability and anxiety scores than the general population.

The researchers employed a double-blind pragmatic cluster randomized controlled trial, carried amongst 50 general practitioners in Norway. A brief intervention (BI) for Medication Overuse Headaches in primary care was examined. The brief intervention was compared to business as usual (BAU) and population controls, and patients were followed up after 3 months.

The primary outcomes of the study were measured by the headache and medication days per month after the 3 months. Headache disability and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) were also measured as secondary outcomes.

According to Dr. Elliot Shevel, South Africa's migraine surgery pioneer and the medical director of The Headache Clinic, the results clearly show that the brief intervention was significantly better than business as usual after 3 months regarding primary outcomes. The Medication Overuse Headache patients had significantly higher headache disability and anxiety scores than the population controls," he says. "This shows an association between these variables." The main conclusion of the study was that patients with Medication Overuse Headaches are a highly disabled group where anxiety and depression are important comorbidities.

Dr. Shevel explains that the disability, anxiety, and depression are very frequently a consequence of the underlying pain, in other words, they are secondary to the pain. The best way therefore to treat the disability, anxiety and depression, according to Dr. Shevel, is to identify and treat the underlying pain. Once the source of the chronic pain is identified and treated, the secondary symptoms diminish or disappear spontaneously, and do not need further treatment. This is the approach used at The Headache Clinic, and has proven an incredibly successful method of treatment.

"Dr. Shevel says that "the best method of treating Medication Overuse Headaches is to treat the original headache. When the original source of the pain is successfully treated, the Medication Overuse Headache spontaneously subsides. The reason for this is that the pain of the Medication Overuse Headaches comes from the same source as the original headache – when the pain source is treated, both the original headache and the Medication Overuse Headaches are treated simultaneously".

Tatiana Akritidou from Limassol, Cyprus visited Dr. Shevel for treatment in South Africa, "I was taking up to 15 tablets a day (including sleeping tablets up to twice a day – which helped to ease the pain). As a result, I never had any strength and felt very weak to do anything around the house or go out – I could not enjoy my life at all... Every morning before the treatment I woke up with a headache and before breakfast I always used to take a couple of painkillers. Now I have stopped taking painkillers completely. My quality of life has improved very significantly, I can do my work and I can enjoy time with my family, my psychological wellbeing has improved a lot – I've become more stable, calm and collected. I do NOT have any regrets about the treatment – I just wish I could have done it at an earlier point in my life". ENDS

The Headache Clinic specializes in treating Medication Overuse Headache and we are proud of our unique success of getting chronic sufferers off medication. Please see below more positive results from patients who share their traumatic experiences and how their quality of life has been radically improved, to include at your discretion.

Melissa Marais (Pretoria)

"I never imagined Spending R3000 of my first pay check on med's I had to hide for my mom, using Tramaxel, Sinflex, Adcodols, Menograines, Genpain, Inderell, Trepaline and urbanol and Maxal everyday and still getting phetadeen. Everyone told me I'm crazy and it's all in the mind... I'm currently using NO medication and I'm living a normal life!!!"

Mariaan Jonker (Pretoria)

"I had headaches for about 18 years. I started to take 2 comprals a day, as the years went by. My body got used to stronger and stronger pain medication and the last few years all the medication did was make my headaches a little more bearable. My headache medication cost was about R1000.00 a month. I was scared of becoming addicted to the medication... Without trying to sound melodramatic, Dr Shevel and the rest of the staff saved my life, by not having to use medication anymore."

For more information or to set up an interview with Dr Shevel please contact Kayleen Naidoo on +2711 484 0933 or kayleen@headacheclinic.co.za

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