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Pharmacoeconomics of migraine

Migraine is a clinical condition with an high prevalence rate and with an important social impact; however wide variations in clinical phenotypes of the disease – i.e. intensity, frequency, duration of the attacks and related disability – make it difficult to estimate its real burden. Recently, some patient and scientific associations launched capillary informative media campaigns centered on migraine awareness, which redirected to specialized medical structures a great percentage of migraine patients, particularly those suffering from low-frequency migraine. These patients often before denied any structured medical approach and were therefore excluded from any overall in-depth analysis of human, social and economic costs caused by their disease. That phenomenon undoubtedly produced better care of migraine in whole population with a consequent spiraling cost for migraine management. However, today the major goal of a modern healthcare system is to achieve the greatest possible efficiency and effectiveness by allocation of available resources.

Pharmacoeconomics is the science that analyzes the costs of drug therapy to healthcare systems and society. The translation of such information and research outcomes into daily medical practice is the main mission and the critical point of a modern healthcare system. The scarce availability of healthcare resources, when compared to enormous, daily boosting healthcare needs, has to be conjugated and thus distributed with the concepts of wisdom, fairness and efficiency.

The management of the majority of migraine cases is centered today on the treatment of the single attack by using triptans or over-the-counter analgesics. Thus, the total expenditure for the treatment of migraine attacks cannot be exactly determined, because analgesics are currently used for most painful disorders, including migraine.

There are multiple sites in the Web providing exhaustive information about this issue, from scientific organizations to scientific journals, from data banks to institutional drug availability and utilization sites, all focusing on pharmacoeconomics. The Web sites closest to migraine management and care have been selected and described in this report.

Not-for-profit organizations

The International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) (<http://www.ispor.org>)

This site reflects the activity of this non-profit organization (ISPOR) whose mission is to facilitate the interchange of scientific knowledge in pharmacoeconomics and patient health outcomes. Probably this is the most organized and exhaustive Web site in this area.

The Institute of Health Economics (IHE) (<http://www.ihe.ca>)

IHE promotes the exchange of initiatives related to health outcomes and health policies between research institutes, academia, government and industry.

Scientific journals

Pharmacoeconomics (<http://www.adis.com/journals/pec/index.html>)

This “is the benchmark journal for peer reviewed, authoritative and practical articles on the application of pharmacoeconomics, outcomes research and quality of life assessment to optimum drug therapy and health outcomes.”

European Journal of Health Economics (<http://www.link.springer.de/link/service/journals/10198/index.htm>)

The growing demand for health economics, in terms of methodologies of pharmacoeconomics analyses, cost-benefit analyses, cost-minimization analyses, resource utilization and revenue enhancement has led Springer Verlag to create and support this interesting new journal.

Journal of Health Economics (<http://www.elsevier.com/homepage/sae/econbase/jhe/ftp.sht>)

Health Economics (<http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/che/he.htm>)

Health Affairs (<http://www.healthaffairs.org>)

Institutional sites

European Commission Medicines Project (EURO-Medicines) (<http://www.euromedicines.org>)

A directory (EURO-Medicines) of all medicines available in European countries was recently created. Such directory can be of help to estimate the impact of migraine therapy by analyzing data about utilization and expenditures for pharmaceutical compounds selectively indicated for the treatment of migraine. Full access to the site is available upon request.

University of York, Health Economics and Health Care Professionals Certificate and Diploma Programmes by Distance Learning (<http://www.york.ac.uk/res/herc/distance.htm>)

This website, offered by the Department of Economics and Related Studies of The University of York, is designed for those working in the health-care sector who wish to gain an accredited online qualification in health economics. The programme is provided and certified by the University of York (UK), and is the result of a collaboration between the Department of Economics and Related Studies, the Centre of Health Economics and the York Health Economics Consortium. These programmes are available to residents in UK and Europe. The two programmes (Certificate and Diploma) are organized with the availability of module workbooks, a tutor support, and the use of a Web-based learning system. The programme fees for both levels are reported.