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Headache as a cause for attending the emergency department in a rural area of Crete

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Background & Aim: Headache is one of the common causes among patients who present to the emergency department (ED) of the Hospital and Health Center. It often exists a history of headaches and the repeated visits are due to the failure of the remission of pain by taking common analgesics.

Method: We studied the demographic, clinical and laboratory characteristics of 101 patients with headache, examined in the Emergency department in a medical office in a rural area of Crete, during a 6-months period of time (January 2015-June 2015). Diagnostic approach of headache was made according to the classification of the International Headache Society. During the history taking, the age of the patient, the type of the onset of the headache (acute, subacute or chronic), the frequency of headaches, the localization and extension of the pain, the character (throbbing, pressing, stabbing headache), the duration of pain, intensity and any changes to, the time of onset of pain, the factors affecting the intensity of pain, the sought for precursor symptoms, aura and associated symptoms (nausea, vomiting, echofovia, photophobia) and the association of headache with menstruation in women were recorded.

Results: 52.4% of the patients examined had previous history of headaches. Specifically, the most common headache appeared were with no specific characters («headache not otherwise specified») (37,3%) followed by migraine (26.2%), tension headache (29; 8%), and cluster headache (4.7%). Significant correlation was found between stress as a cause and precipitating factor for all types of primary headaches. Among the other causes, hypertensive crisis, teeth problems, ear infections, sinusitis, and alcohol intake were the causes of headaches mostly detected.

Conclusions: Headache is a common cause of attendance for patients, which deserves particular attention concerning both the rapid and effective treatment and management, since it can affect everyday quality of life.