

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MIGRAINE? UNMET CHALLENGES IN HEADACHE EDUCATION

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Background. Headache disorders are among the leading causes of disability worldwide, affecting 2.9 billion people in 2023. Instead of this substantial burden, medical education on headache remains limited: on average, only 4 hours of undergraduate curricula are dedicated to the topic, and knowledge of the ICHD-3 criteria is often inadequate. This study aims to assess the interest, training methods, and level of education on headache disorders among Italian specialists, non-specialists, and residents.

Methods. An anonymous survey was conducted in 2025 via Google Forms and disseminated through university channels and word of mouth. Participants were stratified by age, gender, university, geographic region, specialty, and graduation year. The questionnaire explored: presence and number of university lectures on headache, attendance, reasons for non-attendance, perceived usefulness of training, interest in further education, and the ability to provide a free-text definition of chronic migraine according to ICHD-3 criteria.

Results. A total of 114 participants completed the survey (61.4% women), representing 26 Italian universities; 50.8% were neurologists or neurology residents. While 79.9% reported having headache lectures during their degree program, about 8% did not attend due to scheduling conflicts rather than lack of interest. Over 75% considered the lectures useful or very useful for clinical practice. All participants who had not received any training stated they would have liked to. Overall, 58.8% believed that education on headache disorders is relevant to their professional activity. When asked to define chronic migraine, only 17 of 83 respondents (20.4%) provided a correct definition; among 71 neurologists, only 14 gave a complete answer.

Conclusions. The survey reveals substantial gaps in headache education within Italian medical training, even among neurologists, indicating that the mere presence of lectures does not ensure adequate learning. The strong interest in more structured training highlights an unmet educational need. Implementing innovative educational strategies—such as digital modules, flipped-classroom approaches, expert-led sessions, and stratified care pathways—may improve diagnostic accuracy, management skills, and referral appropriateness. Strengthening headache education should be considered a priority to enhance care quality and reduce the burden of one of the most prevalent and disabling neurological conditions.