

Guidelines for the organization of headache education in Europe: the headache school

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Summary

According to its mission statement, one of the goals of the European Headache Federation (EHF) is to “educate Europe” about headache through the teaching of the key health personnel, such as young physicians and all those involved in headache management, about the seriousness of headache disorders.

The countries of Europe share a close geographical proximity that facilitates international exchanges, particularly between university faculties. In recent years, this has, indeed, been the working basis of European educational endeavours in the field of headache. For a number of years, annual summer schools were organized in different European countries and a permanent Summer Headache School was set up in Cambridge (to be held every alternate year). The last summer headache school was held in Vilnius in 2002. In the past decade, a patron-

age scheme was also set up, which, combining two or more countries (one developed, one or more developing), allowed international exchanges of doctors and students for training purposes. In some centres, participants were also able to gain clinical practice and research experience by staying at the host institutions for extended periods of time.

As a result of all this activity there have emerged, in Europe, “clusters” of people with a particular interest in headache. However, the rapid growth of insight into headache (new molecules, new headache categories, etc.) has contributed to a widening of the scientific gap between developing and developed countries. Moreover, in the past four years, due to the relative restriction of national/international drug company budgets, it has proved possible to organize only relatively inexpensive teaching courses. As a result, countries whose medical communities had been developing a “headache culture” now find themselves destined to be increasingly held back.

Therefore, the EHF, in order to promote education on headache in Europe at national level, felt there was a need for guidelines for the organization of educational courses that meet uniform standards of excellence and in terms of code of conduct: guaranteed courses that will attract investors and those seeking to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding in the area of primary and secondary headache.

The guidelines, presented here, specify the ideal length of a headache course, the number of lectures it should include, as well as the ideal number of participants and teachers. A sample course outline is provided, together with a checklist to help the organizers to meet the criteria for an EHF-approved headache school.

KEY WORDS: education, Europe, headache.

Introduction

According to its mission statement, one of the aims of the European Headache Federation (EHF) is to “educate Europe” about headache (1). This can probably best be done by teaching key health personnel, such as young physicians and those involved in the management of headache patients, about the various headache forms and in particular about the serious forms of headache.

The countries of Europe are in close geographical proximity to one another and this proximity favours international exchanges, particularly between university faculties. In recent years, this has, indeed, been the working basis and successful mechanism of European educational endeavours in the field of headache. Beginning in 1992, a summer school was, for several years, held annually in different European countries: Antalya, Stresa, Oporto, Cambridge, Copenhagen, Kiel. Then, Cambridge

became the venue for a permanent Summer Headache School (to be held every alternate year); the last summer headache school was held in 2002 in Vilnius.

In the past decade, a patronage scheme was also set up, which, combining two or more countries (one developed, one or more developing), allowed international exchanges of doctors and students for training purposes. The countries participating in this successful scheme were: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia (1,2). In some centres, participants were also given the opportunity to gain clinical practice and research experience by staying at the host institutions for extended periods of time, and this allowed them to achieve a higher standard of training (2,3). As a result of all this activity there have emerged, in Europe, "clusters" of people with a particular interest in headache.

The EHF has also put a lot of effort into producing easy reading booklets on the basic concepts of primary headache, targeting general physicians (3-5).

However, the rapid growth of insight into headache (new molecules, new headache categories, etc.) has contributed to a widening of the scientific gap between developing and developed countries. Moreover, in the past four years, due to the relative restriction of national/international drug company budgets, it has proved possible to organize only relatively inexpensive teaching courses (e.g., Lithuania in 2002).

As a result, countries whose medical communities had been developing a "headache culture" now find themselves destined to be increasingly held back. In view of all these considerations, it was deemed useful, in order to promote education on headache in Europe at national level, to develop guidelines for the organization of educational courses that meet uniform standards of excellence and in terms of code of conduct – in short, guaranteed courses that will attract investors and those seeking to increase their knowledge in this field.

A sample course outline, developed in accordance with the systematic guidelines presented in this paper, is given below (see Appendix).

Teaching course format

Target of the guidelines

These guidelines are aimed at institutions, such as national neurological societies, European neurological societies or allied scientific organizations, that are planning to organize headache teaching courses at postgraduate level.

Aim of the course

The aim of the course is to enable participants to gain knowledge, skills, and understanding, in the area of primary and secondary headache, that will contribute to their personal and professional development. By the end of the course, they should have enhanced their clinical skills, including their capacity to interact appropriately with affected individuals. Ideally, this should translate into an enhanced quality of life for headache sufferers. The key aim is that the knowledge gained from the course be applied in the participants' various profession-

al fields. The national society/research group hosting the course will apply to the appropriate authorities for Continuous Medical Education (CME) credits. In this way, the participants will be attending a course that can contribute to a certified university qualification.

The target audience may include general practitioners, general neurologists, clinical pharmacologists, and internal medicine specialists, and the course brochure should specify which of these it is aimed at, and be planned accordingly.

The teaching course must be specifically designed to help participants to:

- recognize the various clinical presentations of headache;
- become familiar with the "red flags" and "comfort signs" approach to diagnosing secondary headaches;
- understand the latest concepts in headache pathophysiology;
- develop treatment plans for helping patients with all aspects of their headache treatment needs;
- formulate a headache management "toolbox" for patients, incorporating acute and preventive treatment approaches;
- devise strategies in order to help patients understand headache treatment tactics and improve patient compliance with therapeutic plans.

Topics

Each day of the course, which should cover both primary and secondary headaches, must incorporate both theory and practical teaching.

The organizers should ensure that any slides used are kept as concise as possible, given that it takes at least 40-60 seconds to explain and understand a slide. Speakers must submit their slides in plenty of time so that they can be printed and available for distribution, on a daily basis, during the course.

Video recordings are the best medium for presenting illustrated case reports on both simple and complex cases, and for making sure that the participants retain the information given. Ten minutes video plus 10-15 minutes' discussion time are usually enough to become familiar with a clinical history. At least two videos per day should be included in the programme.

Venue

The course should preferably be organized in a hospital/university setting. Expensive hotels with tourist facilities should be avoided.

Duration of the course

The ideal/minimum duration of a course is three days. Concise one-day courses can be organized under the supervision, or with the advice of the EHF, on condition that the recommended ratio of practical/theoretical teaching is respected.

Number of participants and structure of lectures

Overcrowded courses prevent the participants from interacting with the lecturers and clearly lower the general level of attention. Around fifty participants should be admit-

ted, ideally divided into two parallel sections of 25 each. The attention of the participants is negatively correlated with the length of the lecture. On the basis of prevailing experience, a duration of 20-25 minutes (+ 5 minutes for questions) is recommended. The course programme should schedule 7-8 teaching hours per day (approximately 15 lectures/case reports). A key element in courses of this kind is the panel discussion or discussion group, which should never be missing from the programme.

Teaching staff

The course should provide participants with an opportunity to share in the experience of international scientists and to exchange opinions and ideas. A 3-4 day course should have a teaching staff of 3-5 foreign lecturers (finances permitting), who should each be given the opportunity to give at least two lectures. The remaining lectures will be given by the local organizers. The discussion at the end of each lecture or at the end of a session gives all the participants an opportunity to express their ideas, considerations, second thoughts, etc. Therefore, each session should have at least two chairmen, whose role is to raise controversial issues and questions, requesting the speaker to express his own personal opinion, or international opinion, on certain topics.

Official language

The official language of the course should possibly be English; in certain situations, national languages can be used, provided that students or doctors are offered translation. Lectures should be given with the aid of telematic means (Powerpoint or similar).

Teaching material

Slide handouts should be available at the beginning of the course. The course material should also include a brief curriculum vitae of each lecturer. The EHF's own congress organizer can help in the assembling of the teaching material.

Evaluation test

A multiple choice questionnaire should be filled in by each participant at the beginning and at the end of the course. The evaluation test should include two questions relating to each lecture. The test results will be mailed to the participants after the course. The EHF may provide an evaluation questionnaire if requested by the organizers. In order to gain CME credits, the participant should attend 80% of the scheduled activity. Vice versa, the participants will also be asked to give their evaluation of the speakers and lecturers.

Miscellaneous

The course format should be included in the preliminary and final programme brochure. In order to be formally approved by the EHF, the course format should be mailed to the President of the European Headache Federation who will distribute the application to the federation's board members for approval. The EHF may offer financial support to countries with

limited local funding (e.g., covering economy flights for 3-5 foreign speakers).

The local organizing committee and the course chairman are responsible for promoting and marketing the course locally. The EHF's own congress organizer may help the local congress company with logistical organization.

The EHF can, upon request, provide the following material.

- IHS Classification slide kit;
- Evaluation test;
- Standard three-day programme (see Appendix) or personalized programme;
- Currently available teaching materials (booklets, brochures, etc.).

Concluding remarks

Teaching is an essential part of academic headache specialty practice and represents a major task for international societies (7). According to a survey in the USA (8,9), 22% of medical schools do not run lectures on headache, and 43% of postgraduate programmes did not include resident lectures on headache. It goes without saying that it takes both time and energy to devise an optimal teaching strategy for the training of new generations of headache specialists. However, one of the priorities of the EHF is to upgrade the level of awareness of and insight into headache problems. Therefore, to achieve systematic education in headache research and clinical practice, there has to be comprehensive teaching. We have a strong feeling that the availability of a proposed headache course format might facilitate the spread of knowledge and understanding of headache in European countries.

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Appendix

Checklist of European Headache Federation requirements for the organization of a teaching course on headache

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Title of the teaching course: Date: City: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chairman of the scientific committee: Institution: E-mail/fax: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Congress venue: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Number of participants: Parallel sections: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Number of foreign lecturers: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Duration of the course: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Duration of the lectures: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Daily practical/theoretical teaching: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Telematic media: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Multiple choice evaluation test: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Handout material requested: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Official language: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Guidelines provided with course material: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Preliminary programme submitted: |
| Notes | |

Sample format of a three-day headache course:

LOCAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE STUDY OF HEADACHE

in conjunction with

EUROPEAN HEADACHE FEDERATION

presents

Title of the course

International School on Headache and Related Disorders

Venue, City

Day 1-3 Month, Year

DAY 1, DATE

8.30-10.30 **section 1**

Chairmen:

8.30 Special Lecture 1: **Classification of Headache** (speaker, 30 min.)

9.00 Epidemiology of headache (speaker 20-25 min., discussion 5 min.)

9.30 Pathophysiology of headache

10.00 The burden of headache

10.30-11.00 *coffee break*

11.00-13.00 **section 2: Migraine**

Chairmen:

11.00 Classification of migraine

11.30 Clinical picture of migraine

12.00 Complications of migraine

12.30 Taking the headache history

13.00-14.00 *lunch*

14.30-16.30 **section 3: Migraine**

Chairmen:

14.30 (video) case report

15.00 Comorbidities of migraine

15.30 Acute drug treatment: NSAIDs & ergotamine

16.00 Acute drug treatment: triptans

16.30-17.00 *coffee break*

17.00-18.30 **section 4: Migraine**

Chairmen:

17.00 (video) case report

17.30 Prophylactic drug treatment: part 1

18.00 Prophylactic drug treatment: part 2

20.00 *dinner*

DAY 2, DATE

8.30-10.30 **section 1: Tension-type headache (TTH)**

Chairmen:

8.30 Special Lecture 2: **Pathogenesis** (speaker, 30 min.)

9.00 Epidemiology of TTH (speaker 20-25 min., discussion 5 min.)

9.30 Classification and clinical picture

10.00 Comorbidities of TTH

10.30-11.00 *coffee break*

11.00-13.00 **section 2: Tension-type headache**

Chairmen:

11.00 Pharmacological treatment

11.30 Non-pharmacological treatment

12.00 Temporomandibular dysfunction and headache

12.30 Medication-overuse headache

13.00-14.00 *lunch*

14.30-16.30 **section 3: Various**

Chairmen:

14.30 (video) case report

15.00 Other primary headaches

15.30 Cervicogenic headache

16.00 Headache in the emergency department

16.30-17.00 *coffee break*

17.00-18.30 **section 4: Various**

Chairmen:

17.00 (video) case report

17.30 Cranial neuralgias

18.00 Which examinations in headache?

20.00 *dinner*

DAY 3, DATE

8.30-10.30 **section 1: Trigeminal autonomic cephalalgias (TACs)**

Chairmen:

8.30 Special Lecture 3: **Pathogenesis of TACs** (speaker, 30 min.)

9.00 Epidemiology and classification of cluster headache (speaker 20-25 min., discussion 5 min.)

9.30 Clinical picture

10.00 Pharmacological treatment

10.30-11.00 *coffee break*

11.00-13.00 **section 2**

Chairmen:

11.00 Paroxysmal hemicrania: clinical picture and treatment

11.30 SUNCT

12.00 Differential diagnosis of TACs

12.30 Post-traumatic headache

13.00-14.00 *lunch*

14.30-16.30 **section 3: Various**

Chairmen:

14.30 (video) case report

15.00 Headache in the elderly

15.30 Headache and reproductive life

16.00 Treatment of menstrual migraine

16.30-17.00 *coffee break*

17.00-18.30 **section 4: Headache in children**

Chairmen:

17.00 (video) case report

17.30 Migraine in children

18.00 Use of drugs in children

20.00 *dinner*