First EU headache index:

The Netherlands top of the first European migraine care ranking

As many as 50 million Europeans suffer from headache and migraine, frequently with handicapping effects. A fundamental problem for headache sufferers is that there is no diagnostic method, which can objectively measure if a person has a headache problem, and how severe it is. The basic diagnostic remain “asking questions to the patient”. For this reason, there is a shortage of actual outcomes data to tell what are the best therapies and if prevention matters compared with other large diseases. The first Euro Headache Index (EHI) compares how 29 European countries address and take care of headache and migraine, generally and in healthcare services.

– It is alarming that such a widespread disease is remarkably weakly reported”, states Dr. Arne Bjornberg, head of the Euro Headache Index research team. “There is no data at European level on prevalence and global impact of headache. Outcomes data are almost non-existent, which harms the development of efficient therapies and headache best practices.”

The 2012 EHI looks into the following areas: Patients rights and information, Professional awareness and education, Access to healthcare, Medication/treatment and Prevention. In total there are 34 indicators for measurement.

The EHI finds that headache suffers have the best conditions in the Netherlands, which score 845 points (out of potentially 1 000), ahead of Germany (825), Denmark (817) and Austria (793). The EHI concludes that there are major improvement needs in most countries.

The EHI finds that headache care in most European countries suffer from:

- No data at European level on prevalence and global impact of headache, which makes it hard to develop efficient strategies and best practice for treatment.
- Though generally supported by patients rights headache sufferers often are in a weak position, as quality information about therapies and care providers is rare and severe headache seldom seems to be a recognized condition for a disability pension.
- The education and training of doctors in most countries seems to pay no or little attention to headache and migraine. The awareness of the severity of these conditions is reported to be weak in many countries. National registries for headache are in reality non-existent.
- There are huge variations around Europe when it comes to the number of neurology specialists and whether you can count on an easy referral by your GP.
- There is evidently no pan-European best practice on the use of pharmaceuticals for therapy, with dramatic variations in prescription of what should be regarded standard medication.
- There seems to be interesting correlations between the prevalence of headache diseases and “quality of life”-indicators such as unemployment rates and work-related stress.
- The Index rank of every country is listed below.
The 2012 Euro Health Consumer Index has been constructed by the Health Consumer Powerhouse (HCP), the Swedish-based research company since 2004 comparing the performance of healthcare systems in 35 countries, advocating the care consumer position. HCP has published more than 40 national and international health consumer indices, supported by unrestricted research grants from a variety of sponsors. The EHI has been supported by a grant from the European Headache Alliance.

All information about the EHI is available at the HCP website: www.healthpowerhouse.com. Reports are free for quote, referring to the source.

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