

INTRODUCTION

Cluster headache (CH) and migraine (M) are distinct clinical entities; however, some patients present with headache patterns that exhibit features of both, without fully meeting the International Classification of Headache Disorders, Third Edition (ICHD-3) criteria for either. These clinical presentations have previously been referred to as cluster-migraine (CluM), cyclical migraine, or clustering episodes of migraine. CluM has been defined as headaches predominantly of one type—CH or M—accompanied by at least one major temporal feature and three minor features of the other, or five minor features of the other. These cases may present a diagnostic challenge for neurologists.

METHODS

We retrospectively reviewed a registry of patients referred to our Headache Center in Parma between 2015 and 2025 to identify those diagnosed with CluM.

CONCLUSION

CluM represents a rare and under-recognized primary headache, in particular the subtype characterized by an overlap of temporal features typical of CH and phenotypic characteristics of M. These cases can be identified through careful clinical assessment, as to guide more effective, individualized treatment strategies.

RESULTS

Ten patients were identified with a diagnosis of CluM. Of these, four were selected for inclusion in this case series, as they exhibited temporal features typical of CH (attack frequency, periodicity, and duration), alongside migraine-like features related to headache phenotype, associated symptoms, and behaviour during attacks. The characteristics of patient headache attacks and their temporal pattern are described in Table 1 and Figure 1.

	GENDER	AGE ONSET	PERIODICITY	CIRCADIAN RHYTHM	FREQUENCY	DURATION
PATIENT 1	F	30	YES	YES	2/DAY	120-180 MIN
PATIENT 2	F	45	YES	NO	1/DAY	15-30 MIN
PATIENT 3	M	19	YES (15 DAYS)	NO	2/DAY	60-120 MIN
PATIENT 4	F	40	YES (25 DAYS)	NO	3/DAY	120-180 MIN

Table 1. Gender, age at onset and temporal headache pattern.

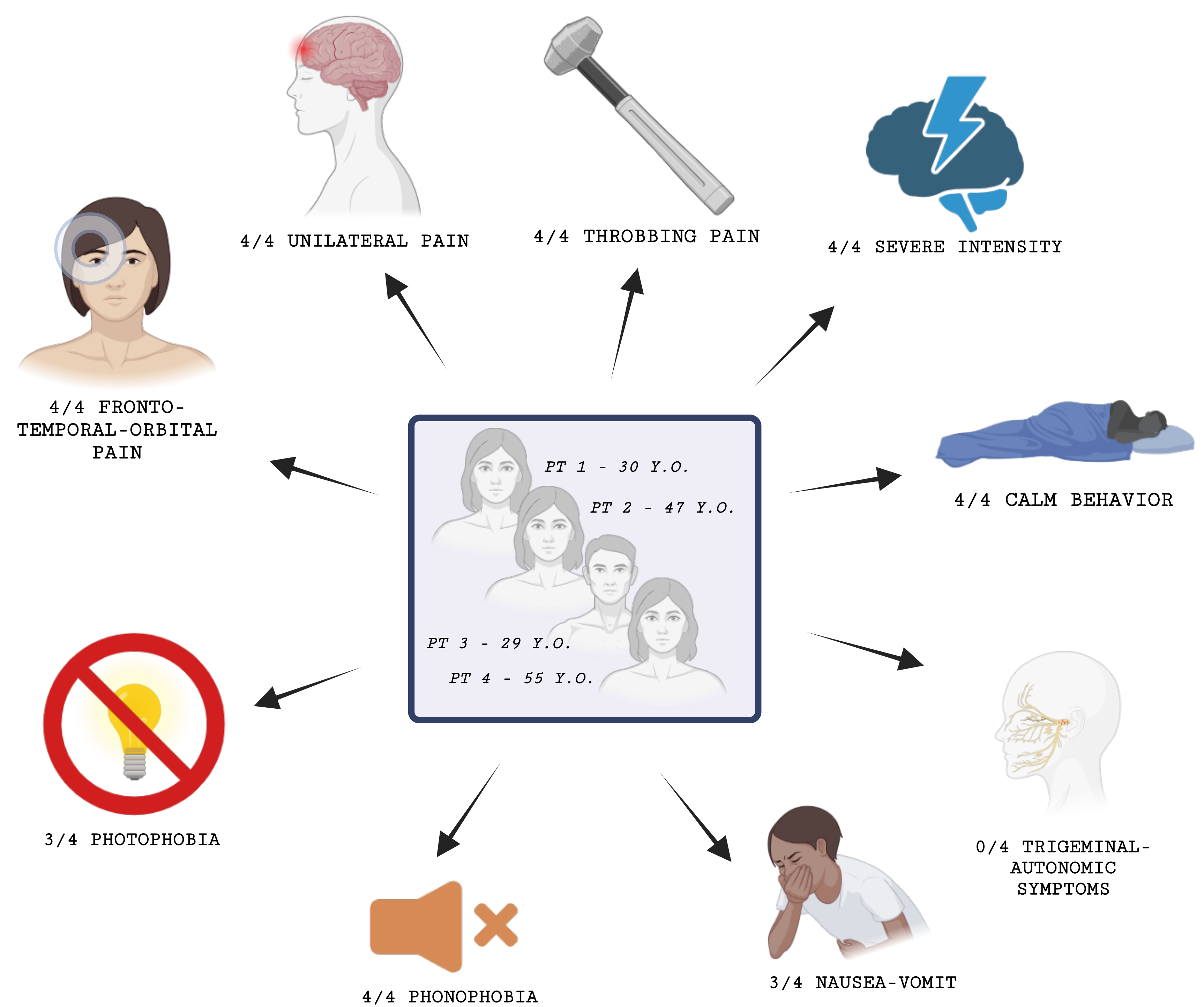


Figure 1. Characteristics of headache attacks in the four patients described.

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