

POST-ICTAL HEADACHE: A COHORT-STUDY ON CONSECUTIVE PATIENTS WITH EPILEPSY

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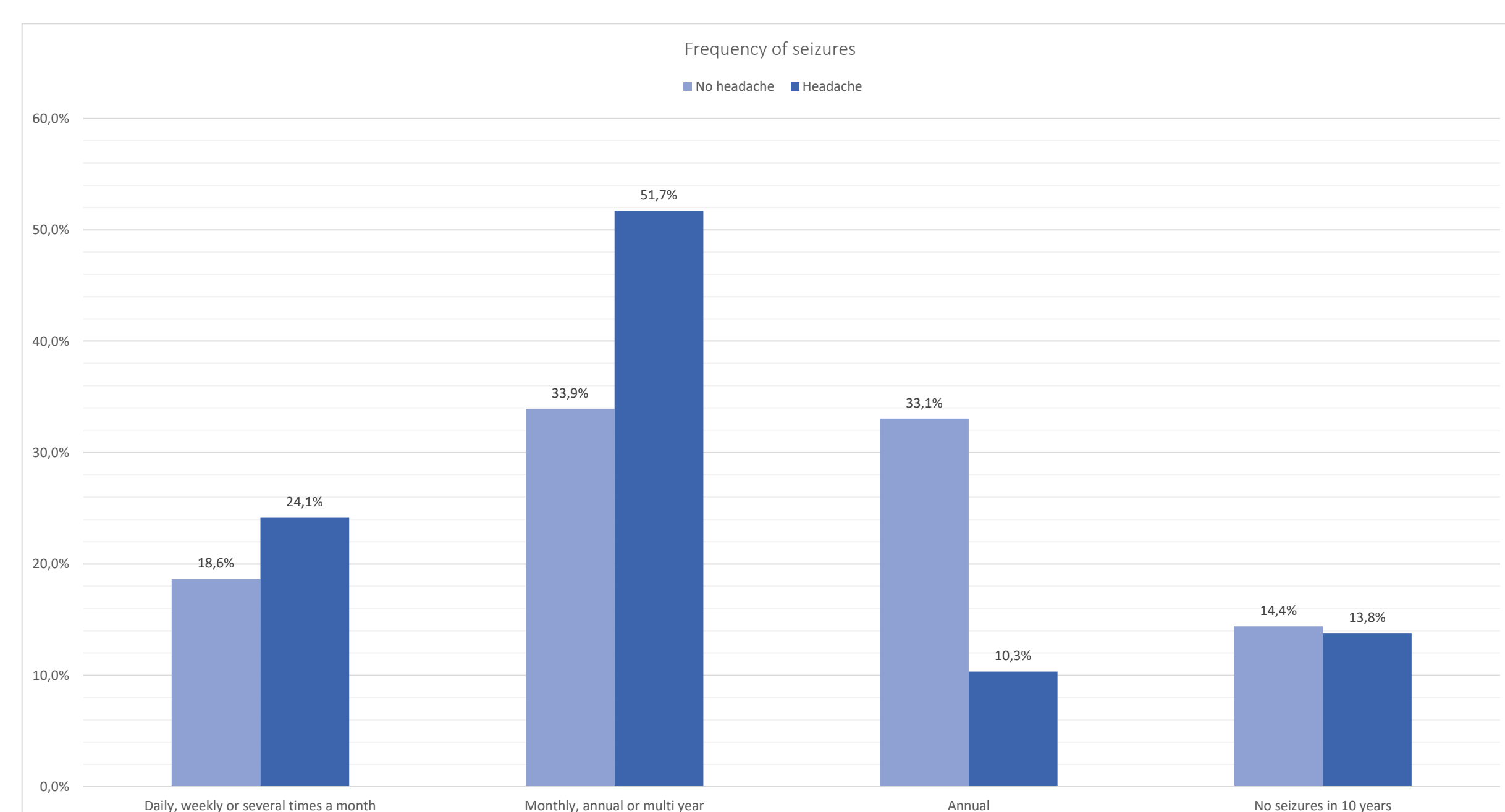
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PURPOSE

We aim to investigate the epidemiology of postictal headache (PIH) in a cohort of consecutive patients from the outpatient epilepsy clinic in Padua, Italy, exploring possible correlations with anti-seizure medications, duration of illness, seizure type, and drug resistance. Additionally, we aim to evaluate the effectiveness of commonly used medications for headache relief, such as paracetamol or Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs).

RESULTS

A total of 209 patients were enrolled, of whom 36 were subsequently excluded. Among the 173 included patients (81 males and 92 females, mean age 43 years), 18.5% (32) reported PIH. About one-third of patients with active and drug-resistant epilepsy had PIH. 77.4% of patients with PIH and 52.6% of patients without headache were on polypharmacy. 55.9% of patients with PIH and 34.2% of patients without headache had seizures with tonic-clonic phase. The post-ictal headache was predominantly moderate or severe (87.5%), with gravative pain (75%), bifrontal or diffuse localization (60.0%), lasting 3-6 hours (37.5%) and often accompanied by nausea (34.4%) and confusional state (25.0%). Nearly half of the patients (46.9%) used common pain relievers to manage it, with reported benefit in 60% of cases.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

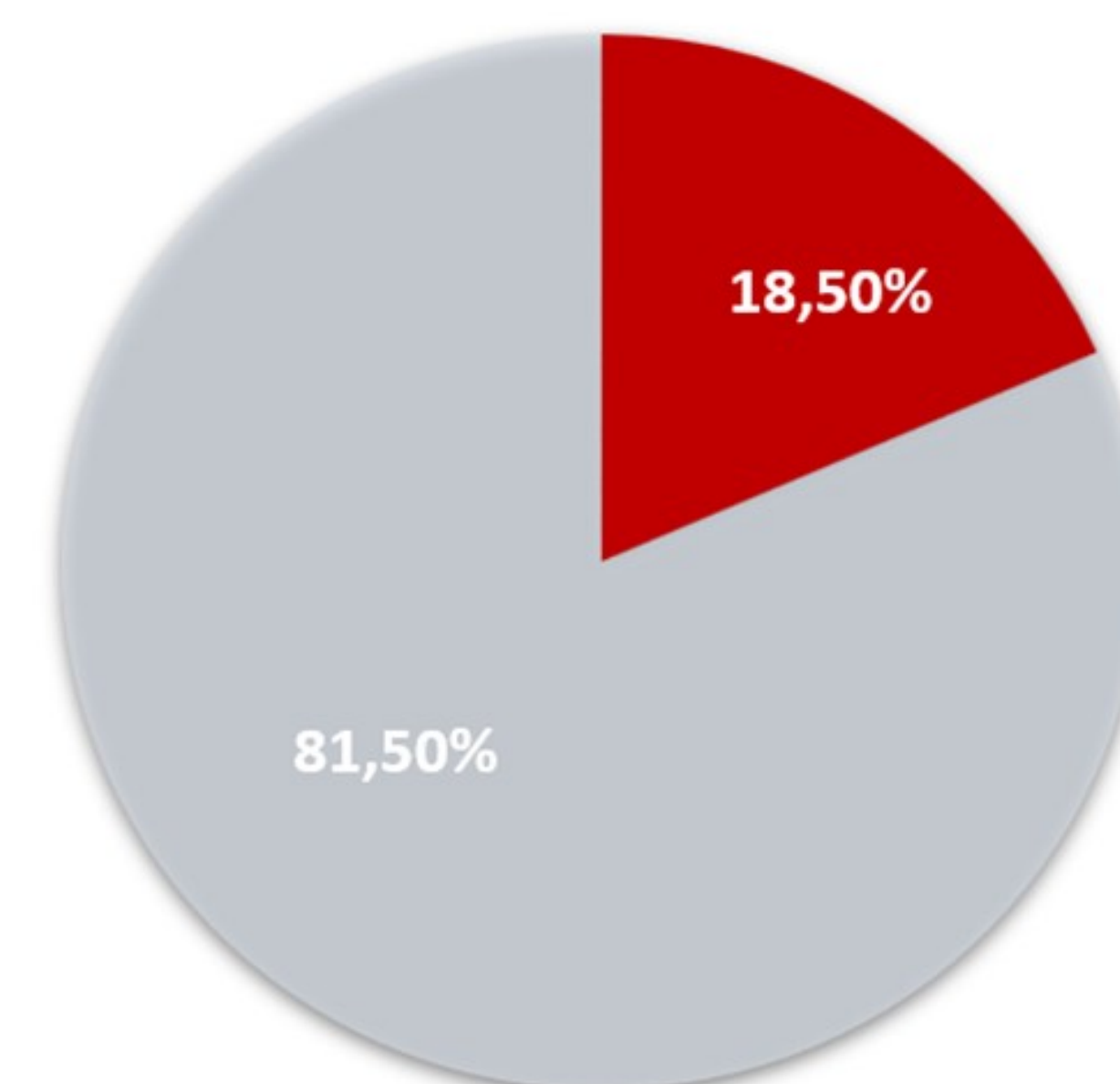
We collected data on type, etiology and activity of epilepsy, type and frequency of seizures, anti-seizure medications, drug resistance, and presence of Post Ictal Headache. When PIH was present, a questionnaire was administered to assess its frequency relative to total seizures, pain intensity and duration, type and location of the pain, associated symptoms, medication use, and the effectiveness of these treatments. Patients with epileptic encephalopathy were excluded from the study.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Post-ictal headache correlates with epilepsy activity, polypharmacy, drug resistance, generalized motor seizures with tonic-clonic phase and focal motor seizures with bilateral evolution; it is also associated with higher seizure frequency. There is no significant correlation with type and etiology of epilepsy and anti-seizure medication taken. Further studies to evaluate the effectiveness of specific drugs, such as triptans, for this form of secondary headache are desirable, as often the intensity and duration of this condition may affect the patient more than the crisis itself and it is often not investigated at all.

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