

Non-pharmacological educational and self-management interventions for people with chronic headache: the CHES research programme including a RCT

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

What did we want to find out?

We wanted to find out if an education and self-management support programme for people with frequent headaches made these people feel better.

What did we do?

We first made sure that we could find people with frequent headaches, from general practice, who would want to take part in our study. We then trained nurses to do telephone interviews to find out what sort of headaches people had.

We looked at previous research and then, together with people with frequent headaches, designed a group education and self-management programme. It was run by a nurse and another health professional over 2 days, followed by a one-to-one session and telephone support with a nurse.

We worked with people with frequent headaches and health professionals specialising in headaches to agree how best to measure how headaches affect people's quality of life.

We then tested our self-management programme. We recruited 736 people with frequent headaches, of whom 727 had migraine. Using a computer, we allocated them at random either to attend the self-management programme or to receive a relaxation compact disc. Everyone was told their headache type. We asked participants to tell us about their headaches and headache quality of life after 4 months, 8 months and 12 months.

What did we find?

Our main results are for the 727 people with migraine. Our support programme did not help people in our study with frequent migraines to live better. There were also no important differences in the number of headaches people had each month or the amount of prescribed or over-the-counter medication they took for their headaches.

What does this mean?

Our short 2-day programme did not appear to improve headache-related quality of life or reduce the number of headache days. Other ways of helping people manage their chronic headaches are needed.

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