

Preface

Headache is the most common problem facing the practising neurologist. The lifetime prevalence of migraine is approximately 16%, while that of chronic tension-type headache, defined as headache on more than half of all days, is 3%. The socio-economic costs of these diseases are very high, ranking third among the neurological diseases after dementia and stroke. In the past, headache disorders have been ill-defined and diagnoses have varied widely from country to country. In addition, the pathophysiology of these disorders has been poorly understood. Fortunately, a rapid increase in our understanding of the mechanisms of these disorders in recent years has been paralleled by the development of a new headache classification with operational diagnostic criteria. The International Headache Society (IHS) published this work in 1988.

The classification of headaches, contained in the IHS Classification, was used in a simplified form for the classification of these disorders in the Tenth Revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10). More detail was included in the Application of ICD-10 to Neurology (ICD-NA, second edition), but it was outside the scope of both ICD-10 and its application to neurology to include the diagnostic criteria for headaches developed by the International Headache Society. Such criteria are necessary in order to ensure that physicians diagnose headache patients in the same way in different countries. WHO therefore decided to publish a separate booklet containing the international classification of headaches together with the diagnostic criteria that have been developed by the International Headache Society.

The IHS Classification has already been translated into more than 12 languages and has been widely accepted. It has been used in the great majority of drug trials carried out since 1988 and the diagnostic criteria of the IHS Classification as reproduced in the present "ICD-10 Guide for Headaches" must be regarded as indispensable in both clinical and research work with patients suffering from headaches. It is hoped that its inclusion in this publication will allow it to be more widely recognized and used.

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