

# Lifting The Burden

## The Global Campaign to Reduce the Burden of Headache Worldwide

A partnership in action between the World Health Organization, World Headache Alliance, International Headache Society and European Headache Federation

### A brief introduction

#### The problem

Headache disorders are real and often lifelong illnesses. They are highly prevalent, affecting men, women and children everywhere, and they are disabling. In the *World Health Report 2001*, the World Health Organization ranked migraine among the top 20 causes in the world of years of healthy life lost to disability. Migraine alone is the cause of an estimated 400,000 lost days from work or school every year per million of the population in developed countries. Migraine harms family and social relationships and damages quality of life. Migraine, however, is only one of the headache disorders with public-health importance: others, including tension-type headache and the various chronic daily headaches, together are believed to be responsible more disability than migraine. If this is correct, headache disorders collectively are in the top ten – and possibly the top five – causes of disability worldwide.

Appropriate health care alleviates this burden, but still it persists everywhere. This is principally because health systems that should provide this care do not reach many who need it.

#### A new solution

*Lifting The Burden* is a response to this health-care failure, which has its roots in education failure.

Launched in 2004, *Lifting The Burden* is a formal collaboration between the World Headache Alliance, the International Headache Society, the European Headache Federation and the World Health Organization.

The first objective of *Lifting The Burden* is to know the size of the headache problem in all regions of the world. This can be achieved by bringing out all of the available worldwide evidence of the burden attributable to headache and by setting up new studies where the evidence is lacking or of poor quality.

The second objective is to exploit this evidence, as a means of persuading governments and other health-service policy-makers, health-care providers, people directly affected by headache and the general population that headache manifestly should have higher priority for treatment.

*Lifting The Burden* is founded on the belief that the basis of the health-care solution for headache in most parts of the world is education. Hence, the third objective is to work with local policy-makers and other key stakeholders to plan and implement health-care services for headache that are appropriate to local systems, resources and locally-assessed needs. Within these services, better diagnosis and better care, and better understanding amongst patients and the public, will all be fostered through education.

*Lifting The Burden* believes that most headache management belongs in primary care, where education must be supplemented by clinical management supports if diagnosis and management are to be optimized. These include diagnostic aids and algorithms; region-based management guidelines developed by harmonizing existing guidelines; information sheets for patients, to aid understanding and promote compliance with treatment; and universally acceptable indices of treatment outcome.

### Lifting The Burden

envisions a future world in which headache disorders are recognized everywhere as real, disabling and deserving of medical care. In this world, all who need headache care have access to it, without artificial barriers.

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