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Characteristics of post-ictal headaches in patients with epilepsy: A longitudinal study

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Since the 19th century, the relation between headaches and epilepsy has been studied. Despite that, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study headache disorders are the third cause of disability worldwide. Besides, in 2016 there were 45.9 million individuals with active epilepsy, 126.055 epilepsy-related deaths, and an epilepsy burden of 13.5 million disability-adjusted life years. It is also estimated that nearly 80% of people with epilepsy live in low- and middle-income countries. Especially the association of epilepsy and migrainous post-ictal headache (PIH) is interesting since they are paroxysmal, chronic and both often respond to antiepileptic drugs although their specific pathophysiological mechanisms are not well known. PIH is often a comorbidity of patients who suffer from epilepsy. However, this condition is usually neglected in the clinical practice because the motor manifestations and other features of a seizure are sometimes comparatively more dramatic and impactful for the patients and their families. The prevalence of PIH varies widely in the literature, probably because of distinct definitions of epilepsy-related headaches, methodological differences across reports and the short duration of most of the studies. In this way, the purpose of this study was to investigate the prevalence, characteristics, and clinical predictors of post-ictal headache in a long-term follow-up of patients with epilepsy in a tertiary center in Brazil.