

Quick Review of Model System Research

Medication Usage Patterns for Headache Treatment After Mild Traumatic Brain Injury¹

What is the study about?

The study examined self-reported medication use and headache treatment in individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI). Headaches are one of the most common and understudied symptoms experienced after mild TBI. Researchers hope to learn the best way to treat headaches for people with TBI.

Who participated in the study?

The study included 212 participants. All were patients at a level 1 trauma center and had mild TBI. Participants were over 18 years old, had acute mild TBI, were able to give consent, English speaking, and had access to a phone after they left the hospital. The study did not include participants who had a central nervous system or mental illness, were drunk or dependent on alcohol, homeless, or intoxicated.

How was the study conducted?

Participants completed a questionnaire during the first week they had been injured that asked about current headaches, headaches before the injury, and symptoms associated with current headaches, aimed at assessing the level of intensity and frequency. Follow-up interviews were conducted at intervals of 3, 6, and 12 months. Participants were also asked to indicate the treatments used and if they helped relieve the headaches. Treatment options included medication, physical therapy, and massages.

What did the study find?

Researchers found that over-the-counter-medication was the most common type of headache treatment used. Few participants treated headaches with prevention strategies. Other types of treatment, such as physical therapy and alternative medicine were rarely used. Overall, participants did not change the method of treating headaches over the period of study. The results of this study suggest that many people with TBI self-treat headaches, which is often not effective in eliminating headaches. The investigators suggest that there may be value in assessing which interventions are effective in treating headaches, and therefore future studies are required to determine effectiveness for treating headaches following TBI.

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¹ DiTommaso C., Hoffman J.M, Lucas S., Dikmen S., Temkin N., Bell K.R. (2014). Medication Usage Patterns for Headache Treatment After Mild Traumatic Brain Injury. *Headache*. 54(3):511-9.