

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Primary Headache Disorders

A report on the Activities 2008-2009

The APPHDG was relaunched in March 2008 when a very successful Reception was held at the House of Commons. It was well supported by Headache UK and guests, and a good number of Parliamentarians came along and expressed their support for the APPHDG and its success.

On Tuesday 15th July 2008, at the meeting chaired by Janet Dean MP, Dr Anne MacGregor, Director of the City of London Migraine Clinic, well known broadcaster on migraine and related issues, made a presentation on, "Women and Migraine: Treating The Real Causes". She gave some hard hitting facts on the proportion of people in the community who suffer from headaches and women, especially young productive women who were the largest group in the population to suffer.

This was followed by a series of meetings through 2008-9 which attracted lively audiences.

On 19th November 2008, Stephen O'Brien MP, Chairman of the APPHDG, presided over the meeting where Dr Timothy J Steiner, Imperial College, London, and Director WHO's Global Campaign to Reduce the Burden of Headache Worldwide, gave a most informative presentation on "the Economic Cost of Migraine and Other Headache Disorders".

On 4th March 2009, under the Chairmanship of Stephen O'Brien MP, Leone Ridsdale, Professor of Neurology and General Practice Kings College London and Dr David Kernick, G.P. from Exeter and Headache Champion gave valuable and welcome advice on how the management of headaches in Primary Care could be improved.

On 9th June 2009, Dr Ishaq Abu Arafah, Consultant Paediatrician with an interest in paediatric neurology at Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust, told the Group of the prevalence of headaches amongst schoolchildren and the impact of migraine on education. Mrs Sam Hoadley and her daughter Amber Judd spoke of their experiences of living with severe headaches over the last 7-8 years.

These meetings have provided an opportunity to publish a series of briefing papers on these key issues.

'Migraine in Women: Is it all in the Hormones', based on the presentation made by Dr Anne MacGregor.

'The Economic Cost of Headache Disorders' based on the presentation made by Dr Timothy J Steiner.

'Headache - Improving Management in Primary Care', based on the presentation made by Professor Leone Ridsdale, and Dr David Kernick.

'Headaches in Children', based on the presentation by Dr Ishaq Abu Arafah.

The briefings were accompanied by a letter from the Chairman and distributed to over 170 Parliamentarians. These briefings can be found on the Headache UK website.

On 23rd November at 5pm, at the next APPHDG meeting, there will be a series of speakers from research institutions who will be discussing the research in which they are engaged. Stephen was keen to get a date in the diary so we can establish the level of research being undertaken

The Headache UK Manifesto will be sent out to MPs within the next few days. It will be on the Headache UK website very shortly and we hope all members will encourage headache sufferers to write to their MP in support of the proposals.

The Chairman of the Group tabled a series of Parliamentary Questions which highlighted the lack of knowledge and data collected by the Government. A further enquiry into information and statistics available from the Strategic Health Authorities showed that they didn't hold this information either. Just a small number of the Primary Health Care Trusts illustrated the fact that information gathering was very patchy, although in small pockets some interesting work was emerging on work being done with headache and sufferers.

Under the leadership of Stephen O'Brien, the Group is proving to be a lively forum for discussion and informed debate on primary headache disorders and migraine. It is planning to continue its programme with the objective of informing Parliamentarians and opinion formers; making them more aware of the problems facing sufferers, the unnecessary drain on the economy and how many of these conditions can be alleviated with the right diagnosis and treatment. It also provides an opportunity for doctors and neurologists to share information on their work in a public forum.

In difficult economic circumstances the Group meetings provide an opportunity to show how money spent in this area of debilitating conditions can save valuable resources. Limited resources on a range of health conditions could be shared to include these very widespread conditions.

Susan Dykes Coordinator APPGPHD

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