



FOR PROFESSIONALS
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MIGRAINE TEST TO HELP REDUCE ABSENTEEISM AND INSURANCE CLAIMS

19 November 2013: With approximately 10% of the population suffering from migraines – according to the Migraine Research Foundation - a new biomarker test aimed at diagnosing chronic migraines could be the key to reducing absenteeism and insurance claims for lost revenue or treatment of the condition.

This is according to Dr Dominique Stott, Executive: Medical Standards and Services at PPS, who says migraines are a common disorder that are incapacitating for the sufferer. “This new test could not only help sufferers diagnose the condition and monitor treatment programmes, but also assist employers to mitigate their financial losses as a result of sick days caused by migraines.”

The clinical study conducted in Spain has suggested that certain indicator levels could be used as a biomarker that will help diagnose chronic migraines in individuals through a simple blood test. Until now, the diagnosis of primary headaches and migraines has been based only on clinical grounds.

For a professional, who is required to run a company or work independently, migraines can have a significant impact on their ability to perform, says Dr Stott. “Unlike headaches, which usually respond to headache medication, migraines require specific and often more costly treatments that can make the sufferer excessively tired and therefore require time off work to recover.”

She says professionals often run private practices where they have intensely busy working environments with appointments booked all day, where it is impossible to just cancel appointments at the last minute when a migraine starts. “Applying professional knowledge, experience and skills whilst suffering from a migraine, even after an appropriate treatment, can affect the higher functions of the individual, such as decision-making skills, judgment and insights, all of which a professional is expected to be able to do as a normal course of their duties. As a result, migraines can lead to both a financial and reputational loss for that individual.”

She says the typical triggers for migraines may also be part of the problem for busy professionals. “Migraine sufferers are more susceptible to an episode if they tend to sleep poorly, take sleeping tablets that can be migranogenic, as well as neglect to eliminate the typical trigger foods from their diet, such as cheese, citrus fruits, chocolate and coffee, and take too many headache tablets. In addition, they may also experience status migrainosus, which is a migraine continuing unabated for more than three days.”

Migraine-related income disability claims figures are not high, as they do not usually last longer than a day or two and it usually takes a minimum of a seven day waiting period for a claim to be assessed, meaning migraines would fall out of this period, says Dr Stott. “As a result, the sufferer might struggle to recuperate income lost as a result of days off work. This test could therefore assist in identifying that the individual is a

chronic migraine sufferer and help them to get the right treatment to prevent lost income or excessive leave days.”

The introduction of this test for migraines is in the test phase, but if introduced will be beneficial for insurers who will be able to differentiate between valid claims and misdiagnosis of the condition. Dr Stott points out that in the long run this will help diminish migraine-based claims.

“Knowing how debilitating migraines can be, PPS will pay true chronic migraine claims if appropriate. However, the first and most important step for anyone is to seek the advice of a medical professional if migraines start affecting the ability to work during the day, worsen or become more frequent,” concludes Dr Stott.