

Introduction

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) can significantly impact quality-of-life and has also been associated with migraine and depression. This study aimed to assess the severity of RLS symptoms, frequency of migraine and depression, and current treatment, in a cohort of patients with RLS.

Method

We performed a questionnaire-based cross-sectional study of patients with an existing diagnosis of RLS, under the care of a neurologist. Patients were contacted by telephone and asked a series of questions designed to assess symptom severity, sleep quality, current treatment, and the presence of migraine and depression. Questions were adapted from the RLS Rating Scale and Patient Health Questionnaire-9.

Results

Of the 46 patients who responded, 67% 'always' felt tired during the daytime and 40% rated their current sleep quality as 'poor'. Sleep onset, frequent waking, and duration of sleep were all problematic. Treatment was in accordance with the current evidence but 72% reported a high frequency of symptoms over the past four weeks (>4 times per week) and severe duration (>3 hours in 24 hours). Whilst more than half of patients reported none/mild/moderate discomfort levels, 50% stated that RLS had a severe/very severe impact on their quality-of-life. Sleep quality was the greatest predictor of quality-of-life rating. The presence of migraine and depressive symptoms were substantially higher than the general population (34.8% experienced migraines and 68% reported current depressive symptoms). Finally, aura and dopaminergic premonitory symptoms may be more common.

Discussion

This study suggests that monitoring symptom severity alone does not accurately reflect the impact of RLS. Furthermore, the increased prevalence of migraine and depressive symptoms highlights the complex effect RLS can have on a patient's quality-of-life and that a broad approach to management may be necessary. Finally, the association of migraine with aura and dopaminergic premonitory symptoms may offer insight into pathophysiology.