

Health

Migraines have significant social and economic burden in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Leading medical experts came together recently to discuss the burdens of migraine across the local society at an event, which was organized by Novartis, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. At the event, which was held under the theme of 'It's time to prevent migraine in Kuwait', healthcare professionals stressed that migraine is a highly disruptive neurological disease that affects all aspects of life, yet its impact on both personal and professional life is vastly underestimated. Headaches are a common complaint; whether it's a mild ache or a blinding paroxysm, people experience the familiar pain of headaches for a wide variety of reasons, but what people do not know is that there is a difference between normal headaches and migraines.

Dr Jasem Al Hashel MD, FRCPC, FAHS, Consultant Neurologist, Kuwait Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine, and President Kuwait Neurological Society said, "In Kuwait, migraine prevalence and disability imprints on the Kuwaiti population are underreported. The neurological disease is a debilitating condition and yet, is often mistaken by others as a mere headache. The World Health Organization classifies severe migraine attacks as among the most disabling illnesses, comparable to dementia, quadriplegia and active psychosis. Many governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders do not

recognize that the direct cost of migraine management is smaller when compared with the large indirect-cost savings that might be made from reducing lost working days, school days, social activities."

Migraines are a neurological disease with extremely incapacitating neurological symptoms. It's typically a severe throbbing recurring pain, usually on one side of the head. During a medical meeting at Radisson Blu Hotel, Dr Hashel explained to Kuwait Times that the medical meeting is the first event of its kind in Kuwait to reveal the releasing of a special drug for migraines that has been approved in the USA's Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"This is a very special moment in Kuwait. Migraines are a very common disease among people, affecting 22 to 25 percent of the population. It is considered to be the third highest disabling disease in the world, that causes disability and decrease of the functionality of people and the quality of their health," he said.

He revealed that there are two types of migraine - migraine without aura, which is the common migraine, and migraine with aura which is more uncommon. "The disease is severe and usually associated with nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, or voice sensitivity and some of them have small senility. The disease usually runs in the family."

He added "There are multiple drugs that been used in the past that been discovered by an incident not design-

ated to treat migraines and there have being tons of researches in the past 30 years in the field of migraine. Till it finally happened and a drug especially to treat migraine was discovered."

The drug targets the calcitonin gene-related peptide receptor (CGRPR) for the prevention of migraine, where it was the first of the group of CGRPR antagonists to be FDA approved in 2018. "The drug has a 1% or less to bring about any side effects. It has the common side effects of constipation, pruritus, as well as mild and mostly transient reactions at the injection site," he noted.

Hashel pointed out that there are misdiagnoses of the disease that may sometimes take years because people can underestimate the diagnosis they are under or the cause of the migraine and this can delay the required treatment. "There is something called the International Classification of Headache Disorders and it is very clear about the classification and diagnostic criteria. They have to meet with the diagnostic criteria that are usually unilateral, bolstays, vomiting, and intense nausea. So if you meet the criteria, then the case is classified as a migraine"

Regarding the cost of the drugs, he said that the cost is relatively expensive, costing 204 KD per month. "The patient must continue the treatment for at least for 6 to 9 months. After that, they can discuss with their doctor if they need to keep taking it or not." He explained that the drug can take only a week to see results and it is main-



Dr Jasem Al Hashel

tained if you keep injecting it. "The most interesting about this drug is that it is the first time in the history of migraine treatment to achieve a rate of 100% response with 0 attacks per month. But it worth noting that there is no cure for migraines, migraines usually run in the genes but you are now able to treat the syndromes. We believe that improving public awareness of migraine through health education and the media is key to reducing the misdiagnosis and result in a better quality of life."

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