Migraine with brainstem aura: Defining the core syndrome

Professor Nooshin Yamani (Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran) presented results describing migraine with brainstem aura (MBA) as a distinct disorder in its own right that is not just part of typical migraine with aura (MA). Literature indicates that MBA is a core disorder—among other evidence, aura symptoms are widespread and can be soley explained by contiguous cortical spreading depression. The prevalence of MBA within the MA population was found to be 1.37%, suggesting that the global prevalence of MBA could be 0.04% or less.

Furthermore, Prof. Yamani stated that since MBA is over-diagnosed within MA, the existing MBA diagnostic criteria are not specific enough. Prof. Yamani concluded that specific diagnostic criteria are needed to include only rare cases in which aura does originate from the brainstem rather than from the cortex.

Migraine—a neuropathic pain syndrome?

One way to categorize pain is nociceptive pain versus neuropathic pain; however, where migraine fits in terms of peripheral and central pain generation is heavily debated. Professor Karl Messlinger (University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany) presented current evidence and hypotheses surrounding this topic, explaining that peripheral and central sensitization, as well as neuropeptide release, occur in both neuropathic pain and migraine. Particularly, evidence has shown that brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) and Piezo-tupe mechanosensitive ion channel component 2 (Piezo2) both have roles in neuropathic pain and migraine, suggesting similarities. He emphasized that the understanding of migraine pain could be improved, and that migraine specialists should strive for increased collaboration with pain researchers and specialists to elucidate these mechanisms further.

What’s up next?

If you haven’t already, visit the Teva booth in the virtual lounge area (also known as the ‘exhibition’ or ‘break room,’ accessible in the Social Corner tab on the EHF congress website) to access full-length webinars from renowned experts on various aspects of migraine.

Virtual congress tips & tricks

As social distancing remains the recommended new normal for the near future, fully virtual conferences are bound to become an integral part of our lives—here’s how to get the most out of them.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VIRTUAL ASPECT

• It may not feel like it, but there are advantages to virtual congresses over physical ones. A major one is that sessions are usually recorded and available on-demand. Don’t feel frustrated about overlapping sessions and utilize this feature to view sessions that you may have missed.

HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK AND ENJOY

• Preconceived notions about online learning can affect your expectations. Keep in mind that events are always experimenting with new platforms, ideas, and methods to engage the audience, and try to enjoy it while also giving honest feedback.