

Platinum Session: Migraine – Bridging the Gap in European Health Policy

Session Report

Panelists

- **Lisa Burke**, Brain Innovation Days Master of Ceremony
- **Frédéric Destrebecq**, Executive Director of the European Brain Council
- **Elena Ruiz de la Torre**, Executive Director of the European Migraine and Headache Alliance
- **Chiara Samele**, Senior Consultant at GAMIAN-Europe
- **Jan Versijpt**, Neurologist and President of the Belgian Headache Society

Context

Migraine contributes to 45.1 million total life years lived with disability and is the second highest cause of disability worldwide. However, migraine is not mentioned anywhere in the European Commission's mental health plans or Health at a Glance reports.

Far from being just a health issue, migraine has a significant economic footprint. Absenteeism and productivity are both impacted by migraine, while estimates are assumed to be under representative because of the associated stigma. Women are much more likely to suffer from migraines, further contributing to inequality in the workplace.

The upcoming European elections offer an opportunity to reevaluate the way that Europe responds to the mental health gauntlet at its doorstep. Excluding migraine from mental health policy is misaligned with the WHO recommendations. As a chronic neurological disease with significant comorbidities and socio-economic impact, migraine needs to be included in Europe's plans on noncommunicable diseases.

In partnership with AbbVie, this session brought together key stakeholders to discuss ways to better include migraine in Europe's plans on noncommunicable diseases or within its mental health strategy.

Content

During the panel discussion, various critical points were explored, shedding light on the multifaceted impact of migraines on patients' lives. Emphasis was placed on the need for a comprehensive understanding of quality of life that extends beyond health, encompassing aspects such as work, study, and daily functioning. A call for a multidisciplinary approach in healthcare, drawing insights from the success of the pain field, was articulated, with a focus on improving interconnectedness in patient care.

During the panel, the speakers addressed various aspects of migraine, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to patient care:

- Elena Ruiz de la Torre underscored the importance of disease recognition, awareness, and education, urging policymakers to develop legislation that considers the diverse severity levels of migraine patients.
- Frédéric Destrebecq highlighted the strength of patient advocacy in driving legislative change, referencing Luxembourg's role in EU patient mobility legislation.
- Jan Versijpt discussed the multidisciplinary approach in healthcare, learning from the pain field's interconnected patient care.

The panel agreed on the need to move beyond siloed health policies, working collectively towards a comprehensive understanding of brain health that includes both mental health and neurological disorders. Overall, they stressed the significance of educating policymakers, changing societal perceptions, and championing a unified approach for improved patient outcomes.

