

Partnering with pharmacy teams to improve migraine management

Project Summary Report
February 2025



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REALISTIC
MEDICINE



the
migraine
trust

NHS
Grampian

Executive Summary

Background

Approximately 1 in 7 people in Scotland live with migraine; a complex, severe and painful long-term health condition. In a survey by The Migraine Trust in January 2022 pharmacies were identified as the number one place people wanted to receive advice.

This project developed and delivered focused training, resources, and a public awareness campaign. The aim was to improve treatment and support available for people living with migraine from 628 community pharmacy teams in Scotland; initially in Grampian and then rolling out to NHS Highland, NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Lothian, NHS Orkney, NHS Shetland, and NHS Tayside.

Methods

Through a collaborative approach which has championed stewardship and sustainability the following has been facilitated:

- Focus groups and surveys of pharmacists and people living with migraine to understand learning needs and support needs
- Development of a self-study module and a suite of problem-based learning modules for pharmacy teams
- Live training workshops and follow up sessions for pharmacy teams
- Patient literature resources
- Public awareness campaigns
- Public webinars

Results

To date 567 health care professionals have engaged with the e-learning modules and 300 have attended live training sessions. Feedback has been extremely positive with staff reporting improved confidence in assessing and treating people with migraine.

A total of 613 people attended the public webinars with recordings of these viewed over 1760 times. Participants reported improved quality of life due to effective treatment plans and support from healthcare staff.

Additionally, the awareness campaigns and literature developed received positive feedback, with patients stating “it is great so see so much awareness being spread” and “it is heart-warming to see.”

Conclusion

Placing the voice of people with migraine and pharmacists at the heart of project design, the project has developed and delivered focused training for all members of the pharmacy team to confidently support people living with migraine. This pathway improvement has been promoted with increased public awareness and engagement with the service. Evaluation data indicates that this project has influenced change in practice of pharmacy and other primary care colleagues, and has influenced improved, awareness, recognition, accessibility of support and supported self-management for people living with migraine.

Background

Approximately 1 in 7 people in Scotland (15%) live with migraine; a complex, severe and painful long-term health condition.

Migraine is the third most common health condition in the world, it is more common than diabetes, asthma and epilepsy combined¹.

Migraine is 2-3 times more common in women than men, affecting 33% of women and 13% of men².

Migraine is the leading cause of disability for people aged 15 to 49 years in the UK and it is estimated that UK wide¹:

- 10 million people aged 16-65 live with migraine
- 190,000 migraine attacks occur daily
- 100,000 people living with migraine are absent from work or school every day
- 94% of primary care consultations for headache are due to migraine.

Improving the quality of migraine care provided will not only improve people's lives but can also reduce pressure on acute services, alongside wider benefits to the economy and society.

This project aimed to improve access to support and treatment for people living with migraine from community pharmacy teams. The Migraine Trust conducted a survey of 1000 people living with migraine in January 2022 in which pharmacies were the number one place people wanted to be able to receive more care and advice. Pharmacies are an accessible resource which already deliver expert care for other conditions. Pharmacy teams support patients to understand and manage medication, provide signposting to resources and advice and counselling on living with life changing conditions.

Phase 1 of the project commenced in January 2023 with the aim to improve awareness, recognition, and management of migraine in pharmacy teams in Grampian. Key outputs of this initial 12-month phase were:

1. to upskill 50 pharmacists on migraine management
2. to produce materials for 132 pharmacies
3. to deliver a "manage your migraine" patient webinar for 200 people

Phase 2 commenced in February 2024 with two core aims:

1. To consolidate and embed year 1 progress in Grampian.
2. to partner with a minimum of three NHS Scotland territorial health boards to extend the reach of pharmacists trained & increase care and support for people living with migraine based on the blueprint NHS Grampian model and approach.

Expanding on the outputs of Phase 1, the following outputs were outlined for Phase 2:

- 150-200 pharmacists across three health boards complete baseline survey
- 150-200 pharmacists engaged with training across three health boards
- national webinar to launch online training module nationally

¹ All Party Parliamentary Group on Primary Headache Disorders. Headache Disorders – not respected, not resourced. London: Stationery Office, 2010.

² [Prevalence | Background information | Migraine | CKS | NICE](#)

- ‘Manage your migraine’ webinar event with attendance of 200 people
- evaluations completed by 150-200 pharmacists
- 200 people living with migraine complete feedback
- creation of a cross board MS Teams channel with 50 members

In Phase 2 NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Lothian & NHS Tayside have run their own projects with support from the NHS Grampian project team. NHS Highland, NHS Orkney, and NHS Shetland proceeded by ensuring training facilitated by the project was promoted and supported by local Pharmacy teams and distributing the developed patient literature resources. Overall, six additional territorial health boards with 628 community pharmacies have engaged with training and activity to improve local access to migraine support.

The project is aligned to the Realistic Medicine programme in NHS Grampian which aims to deliver a pathway redesign based on realistic medicine and value-based health and care principles. By having patient and staff experiences inform the service development we aim to reduce unwarranted variation and inequality; reduce waste and harm; and empower people to make informed choices about their care through shared decisions. Put simply, we recognise that understanding what matters most to patients and staff, we can improve the delivery of healthcare.

Positive engagement across all stakeholder groups, cross-system working, and public involvement have been the foundations of Phase 1 of the project in Grampian and expanding this project to Phase 2. This includes collaborative work between Pharmacy Medicines Directorates, Neurologists, and GP/GP with extended role, third sector, people living with migraine and the wider public. The cornerstone of achieving and sustaining collaboration was a dedicated agile project manager with expertise in applying change theory.

Methods

Throughout the two-year life of the project, patient and staff involvement has been at the core to all decision making. To deliver valuable care, we had to understand people's experiences and act on their feedback to provide more person-centered care³.

Staff Involvement

In April 2023, a focus group consisting of ten pharmacists was held in Grampian to assess the current knowledge and confidence levels of community pharmacists in supporting people living with migraine. This was followed up by a survey with 23 responses to seek wider views. By involving pharmacists at the very start, we were able to understand learning needs and practical considerations.

The focus group and survey findings, informed development of an eLearning module: [Migraine management for the pharmacy team](#). This was developed by the subject matter experts on the project team in line with the National Headache Pathway to aid the assessment, diagnosis and management migraine and give guidance on when to consider other headache disorders. The focus group attendees and some of their team members

³ [Value Based Health and Care Action Plan](#)

subsequently tested the module to ensure it effectively supported them in enhancing their skill levels.

The [Community Pharmacy Learning Together: Migraine](#) modules, which were developed in collaboration with NES Pharmacy, had input from Grampian headache specialists and pharmacy staff too. These modules were specifically developed following feedback from pharmacy staff that the original eLearning module was too clinical for non-clinical staff members.

Over the course of the project a complete Turas learning site [Migraine management](#) with various resources such as the modules, workshop recordings and patient resources was developed ensuring continued availability beyond the project life cycle.

During Phase 1 of the project, four initial training workshops were held in Grampian in September 2023, three on MS Teams and one in person. A further follow up workshop was held virtually in December 2023.

During Phase 2, Grampian facilitated a further five virtual workshops:

- in May 2024 to staff from NHS Orkney and Shetland
- two in September 2024 to staff from NHS Highland and NHS Lanarkshire
- with NES in October 2024 to launch the Community Pharmacy Learning together modules
- a follow up workshop in January 2025

NHS Lothian delivered their own staff workshop, using the same resources developed through the project to limit any variation.

Throughout the workshops, pre- and post- training feedback was sought from attendees to evaluate impact of the sessions, by measurement of any change in self-reported confidence and knowledge.

Recognising that the scope of practice for pharmacists in Scotland is set to change soon, with all pharmacists qualifying from 2026 also qualifying as independent prescribers, the project team directly engaged with the Pharmacy Undergraduate teams at Robert Gordon University (RGU) and Strathclyde University to ensure migraine is a priority on their curriculum.

It was found that migraine and its management was not covered in detail at Strathclyde and not covered at all by RGU. Following discussion with the project team RGU committed to embed the project training resources into undergraduate learning from September 2024 and Strathclyde University will do so from 2025.

Patient Involvement

In June 2023, 16 people living with migraine attend a focus group and 162 complete a wider survey. Engaging with people living with migraine, allowed an understanding of what would enable them to access support from pharmacy. Their experience and ideas were used to shape the training, public awareness campaign and the patient webinar.

Those who attended the focus group and completed the survey were invited to join a mailing list which we used to update them on the projects and to ask for feedback on the development of resources such as the patient literature and public awareness campaigns (figure 1).



Figure 1: Public awareness poster Phase 1 & Phase 2

The first public awareness campaign, which ran for 6 months in Grampian, began on the 1 January 2024. In collaboration with The Migraine Trust and NHS Grampian's marketing and communication teams, and incorporating suggestions from people living with migraine, the awareness campaign in Phase 1 included social media assets, a radio advert, advertisements on buses and billboards as seen in figure 2.

The public awareness campaign in Phase 2 was refined based on the feedback received from people living with migraine for the campaign in Phase 1. It started on 20 January 2025 and is running until March 2025, across the seven project health boards, targeting women aged 18-45, a demographic with a higher prevalence of migraine, to ensure budget efficiency and impact. It focuses on three overlapping methods of promotion:

- Meta: Maximize reach and engagement on Facebook and Instagram with multiple ad formats.
- Podcasts: Target health-conscious listeners for direct, impactful messaging.
- Programmatic Native: Place in-depth articles on relevant sites to educate and resonate with audiences.



Figure 2. Phase 1 public awareness billboard at Aberdeen city ice rink

Two public webinars were held as part of the project, one in each phase. People living with migraine, those with family/friends with migraine and healthcare professionals were targeted with promotion via social media, awareness campaign, NHS Grampian Daily Brief, local media, and from health professional signposting. The webinars were facilitated by a Consultant Neurologist, a GP with Special Interest in Headache, Pharmacist, and representative from The Migraine Trust. People who attended the webinars were asked for pre- and post- session feedback to evaluate impact of the session, and a follow up survey was sent to get more in-depth feedback.

A strong theme which emerged from the project planning phase patient focus group, was the benefits of peer support when meeting with others living with migraine. Recognising this, the project group collaborated with the Grampian Hospital Art Trust to hold two art and two creative writing sessions in Aberdeen city's wellbeing hub. The sessions provided a safe space for those living with migraine to come together to express how it has impacted their lives while connecting with others living with the condition.

In November 2024, individuals in Grampian living with migraine were invited through social media and the NHS Grampian daily brief to complete a personal case study. This initiative aimed to assess the overall impact of the service improvement by having participants describe how migraine have affected their lives and share whether the project's resources or events have positively influenced them.

Quantitative Data Review

An exploration of project impact on Accident & Emergency attendance numbers in Grampian was attempted, however due to the inconsistency in data input and workload involved in obtaining the information this was not feasible.

It was explored whether Primary Care Intelligence Service (PCIS) could interrogate data to determine if there had been any project impact. However, due to the service being in the very early stages of development no data could be obtained.

The following available quantitative data have been used as key measures of project impact:

- engagement with migraine management eLearning modules (data from Turas)
- live training for clinicians – attendees and YouTube views

- public webinars – attendees and YouTube views
- NHS Grampian [What is Headache](#) and [Migraine](#) webpage hits

A high-level review of the impact the service improvement has had on the number and quality of referrals made to the Outpatient Headache Clinic in Grampian has also been undertaken. Using the Business Objects reporting tool (BOXI), annual reports were generated to show the number patients that had been vetted by Neurology to new/return outpatient waiting lists for the headache clinic at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary from February 2016 until January 2025.

Findings

Baseline information on Pharmacy based migraine management

Engagement from pharmacists in Grampian demonstrated the need to improve confidence and knowledge amongst pharmacy teams to enhance conversations about migraine.

This was echoed in Phase 2 when baseline surveys conducted by the partner boards echoed the need for ongoing education and support to enhance confidence and effectiveness in treatment. Significantly, it was also highlighted that training should be available for the whole pharmacy team to reflect how they operate and to achieve more impact.

Across NHS Grampian, NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Lothian 131 healthcare professionals completed the baseline surveys ahead of training and it was reported that on average:

- 50% were not confident in dealing with migraine management in their practice
- 63% were not confident they have a good understanding of migraine, and migraine management

In NHS Grampian members of the public (n=162) completed a baseline survey, of which 62% had never accessed a pharmacist and 14% had ever accessed support from a pharmacist for support with migraine management. However, 77% of the people surveyed in NHS Grampian would consider accessing support from community pharmacy teams to manage their condition. Conversely in NHS Lanarkshire 68% of people surveyed (n=38) had accessed a pharmacy for support with migraine management, but only 37% reported that they felt the support was good or very good.

Both groups (n=200) were also questioned as to why they felt pharmacies would be a useful place to access support for migraine management. An average of 35% reported knowledge and 33% accessibility of community pharmacies as the key reasons why they would consider accessing these teams for support.

eLearning Module Engagement

The first eLearning module, *Migraine management for the pharmacy team*, was launched in August 2023. The overall engagement data for this can be seen in figure 3 and the completion by pharmacy role is outlined in figure 4.

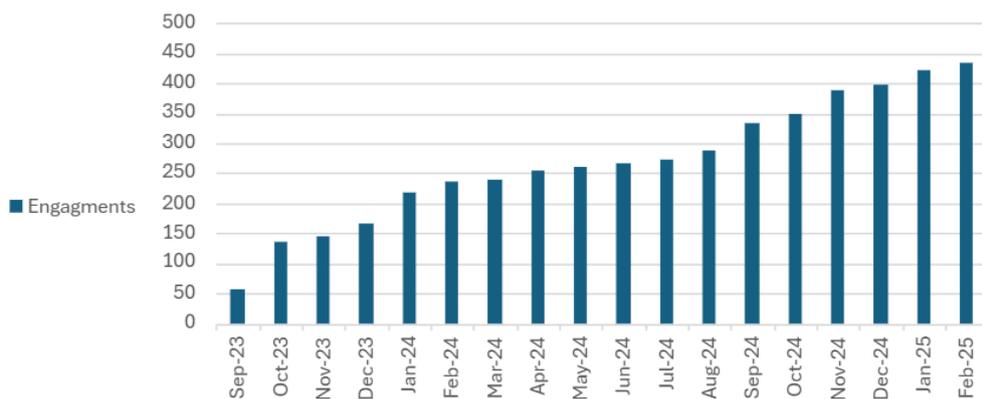


Figure 3. Engagement data for Migraine management for the pharmacy team module

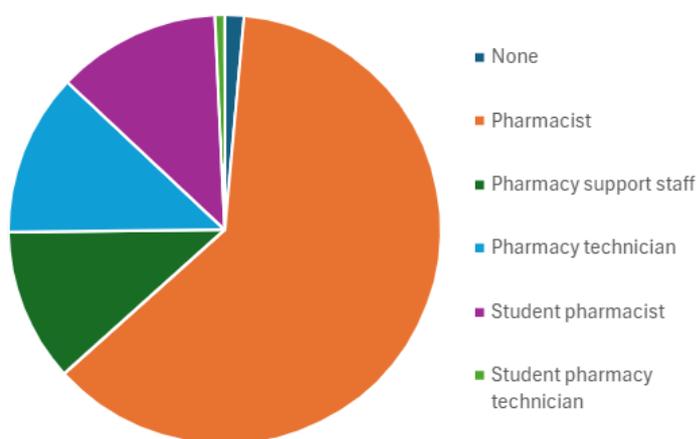


Figure 4. Completion of Migraine management for the pharmacy team module by pharmacy role

Despite being developed with pharmacy teams in mind, access to the module and learning site have remained open to all Turas users. From this we can see that the module has been completed by staff in a variety of roles throughout boards and other institutions in Scotland as shown in figure 5 and table 1.

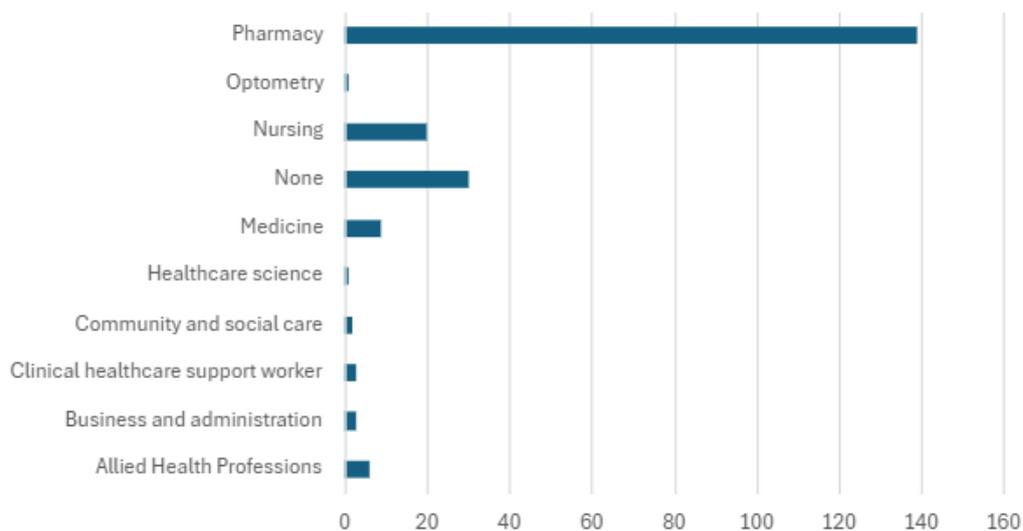


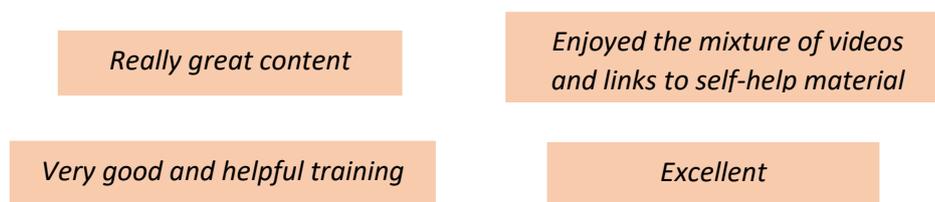
Figure 5. Completion of Migraine management for the pharmacy team module by role

Organisation	
Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership	NHS Lothian
NHS 24	NHS Shetland
NHS Ayrshire and Arran	NHS Tayside
NHS Borders	NHS Western Isles
NHS Dumfries and Galloway	Open University in Scotland
NHS Education for Scotland	Other Public Sector in Scotland
NHS Fife	Private healthcare other
NHS Forth Valley	Public healthcare
NHS Grampian	Robert Gordon University
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde	Scottish Ambulance Service
NHS Highland	University of Aberdeen
NHS Lanarkshire	University of Strathclyde

Table 1. Migraine management for the pharmacy team module engagement by organisation

Overall staff have rated the module as 4.75 out of 5. 

These responses show a positive endorsement



The eLearning resource, *Community Pharmacy Learning Together: Migraine* was launched by NES via a staff webinar in September 2024 with the modules going live in late October 2024. The engagement data for these modules can be seen in figure 6. These resources were created for pharmacy teams to work through together however the data only represents the one person in the pharmacy that is moving through the resource. For this reason, engagement figures may be unrepresented.

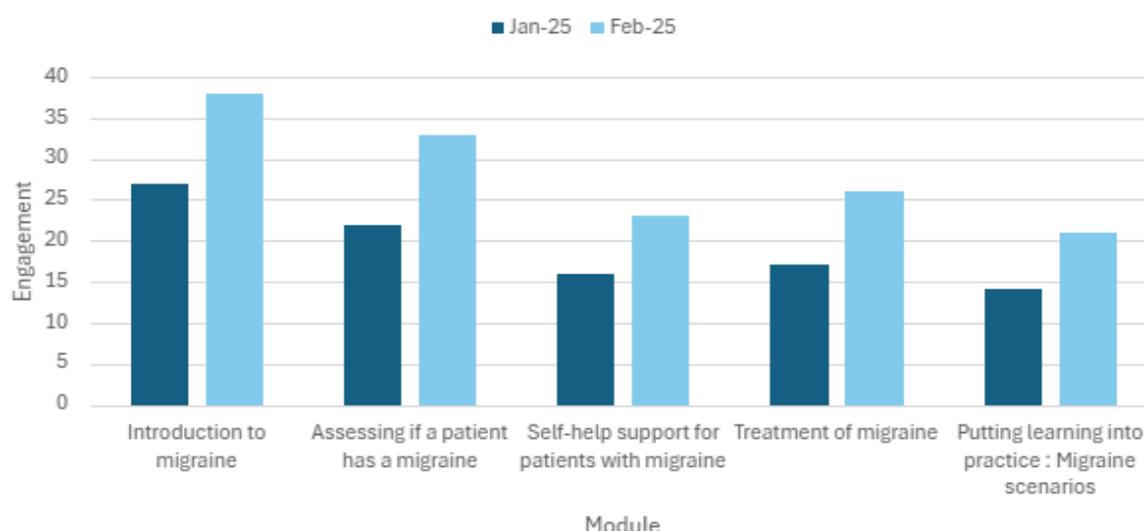


Figure 6. Community Pharmacy Learning Together: Migraine module engagement

Staff Workshop Engagement

Across the lifecycle of the project, ten workshops have been facilitated by staff from NHS Grampian and one by NHS Lothian. There has been a total of 300 attendees across these workshops, numbers for each workshop can be found in figure 7. The core Phase 1 workshops in September 2023 were, according to the workforce data at that time, attended by 30% of community pharmacists in NHS Grampian and 27% of prescribing pharmacists in NHS Grampian.

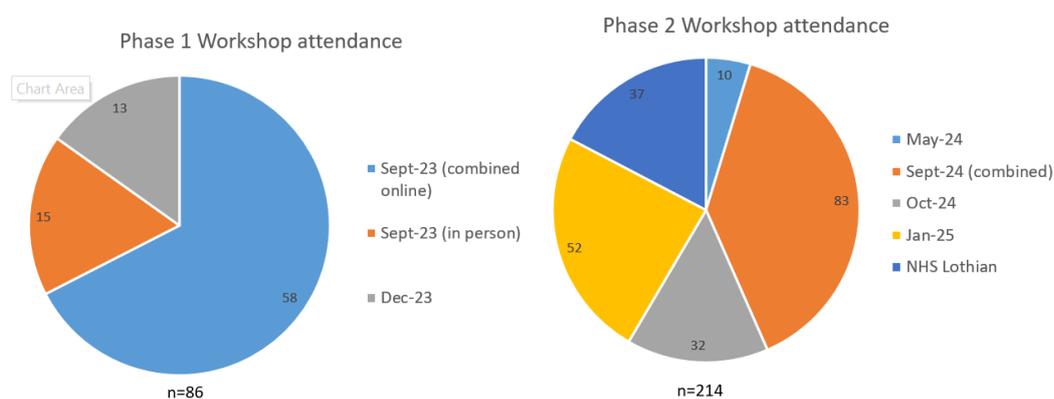


Figure 7. Workshop attendance data comparison

While these workshops have been targeted at pharmacy staff within the projects partner boards the workshops have been attended by a variety of staff from organisations within and outside the scope of the project as seen in table 2 and table 3 (*Abbvie Ltd. and Norsepharm Ltd are pharmaceutical companies).

Organisation	
Abbvie Ltd*	NHS Orkney
NHS Ayrshire and Arran	NHS Scotland
NHS Fife	NHS Shetland
NHS Grampian	NHS Tayside
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde	NHS24
NHS Highland	Norsepharm Ltd*
NHS Lanarkshire	Scottish Ambulance Service
NHS Lothian	

Table 2. Organisations who have been represented at the workshops

Pharmacy Roles	Non-Pharmacy role	
Community pharmacist	Advanced Nurse practitioner	Healthcare Support Worker
Dispenser	Biomedical Scientist	Neurology Specialist Pharmacist
Pharmacist	Care at Home Manager	Nurse
Pharmacy manager	Clinical Research Fellow	Practice Nurse
Pharmacy Technician	Consultant Neurology	Programme Manager
Prescribing Adviser	Dietitian	Research Nurse
Primary Care Pharmacist	District Nurse	SAS Doctor
Trainee Pharmacy Dispenser	GP	Support Manager
Student Pharmacist	Health Improvement Advisor	Trainee Advanced Nurse Practitioner

Table 3. Roles that have been represented at the workshops

During the Grampian workshops in September 2023, pre-training polls indicated that 45% of attendees (n=44) felt they had a good understanding of migraine and their management, and 41% felt confident in dealing with people with migraine. After the training, 100% of attendees reported having a good understanding of migraine, felt confident in dealing with people with migraine, and would recommend the training to colleagues.

Evaluation of the surveys completed by staff attending the core workshops in Phase 2 (n=131) showed that there was a 73.5% increase in clinicians who agree or strongly agree that they have a good understanding of migraine and its management after the workshop. Additionally, there was a 71% increase in clinicians who feel confident in assessing whether a person is presenting with migraine, and a 56.5% increase in those who feel confident in supplying medication for migraine. Attendee feedback from across the workshops includes:

After tonight's workshop and completing training, I feel more confident initiating conversations with my migraine patients.

More confident in diagnosing and the differentials

Feel much more confident in identifying migraine.

Excellent presentation, will be much more confident dealing with migraine presentation in the community pharmacy and treatment

Some key takeaways reported by staff following the workshops include:



Public awareness and engagement

NHS Grampian Webpages

Recognising the need for a Grampian-based central resource for patient information the existing [What is Headache](#) webpage was updated, and a [Migraine](#) webpage was developed. The migraine webpage been promoted widely in Grampian using patient information cards, posters, social media, the NHS Grampian Daily Brief and during events. Engagement with the Migraine website has been monitored monthly and can be seen in figure 8. The 'Migraine' webpage, launched in October 2023, has garnered 1,627 hits. Additionally, the updated 'What is Headache' webpage has received 899 hits since its update in the same month.

The resources sign posted within the Grampian webpages are found within The Migraine Trust webpages which has seen users to its pages increase from 14,117 in September to December 2022 to 40,898 during the same period in 2024.

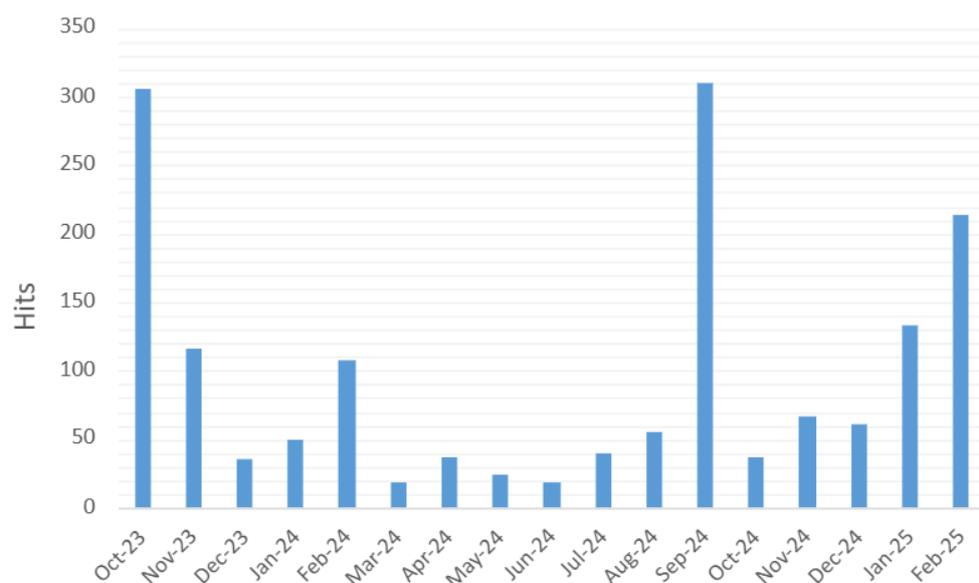


Figure 8. NHS Grampian Migraine Webpage hits

Public Webinars

As part of the baseline patient survey (n=162) people living with migraine were asked if they would be interested in attending a public webinar on migraine and its management. As is seen in figure 9 a significant majority were in favour. The content of the webinar was developed based on responses from the baseline survey as well as the initial post webinar survey. Questions were also posed as to the best day and time for people to attend a webinar and consideration was given to this when planning the events.

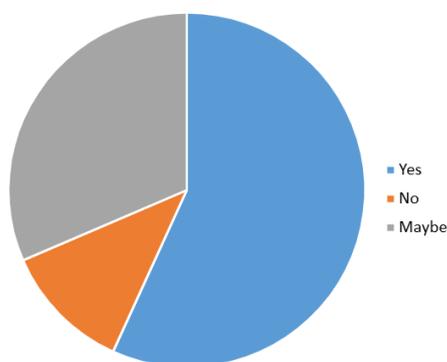


Figure 9. Baseline patient survey of interest in attending a public webinar on migraine

During Phase 1, the Grampian focused public webinar [Understanding migraine, treatments and accessing Grampian support](#), held in January 2024 attracted over 900 sign-ups, with 463 people attending the live session. Within the first 24 hours of upload, the event recording was viewed 416 times on YouTube and to date has had 1493 views.

A further public webinar, [Navigating Migraine: Understanding migraine and accessing Community Support](#), was held in January 2025. It targeted towards people living within the seven boards in the project. The webinar had 150 attendees, 358 sign-ups, and 313 YouTube views of the recording to date. Variation in project progress due to project member capacity and communication levels in the partner boards as well as a large attendance from Grampian

at the first public webinar may have impacted the attendance numbers for this. In Grampian the public webinar was heavily promoted from a wide variety of sources. NHS Lanarkshire explored a variety of alternative communication routes beyond the public awareness campaign. This impact is evident in the attendance figures, with 22% of webinar attendees residing in NHS Lanarkshire.

Evaluation of the surveys completed during and after the webinars found that on average:

- 77% of attendees live with migraine, 7% have friends or family with migraine and 17% are healthcare professionals. (Figure 10 shows the data for each webinar)
- 48% of attendees had discussed migraine with a pharmacist before the webinar, after the sessions, 91% said they would consider it
- 93% of attendees felt that attending the event improved their understanding of migraine and its management
- 76% said the event helped with their concerns and anxieties
- 99% either strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with the event

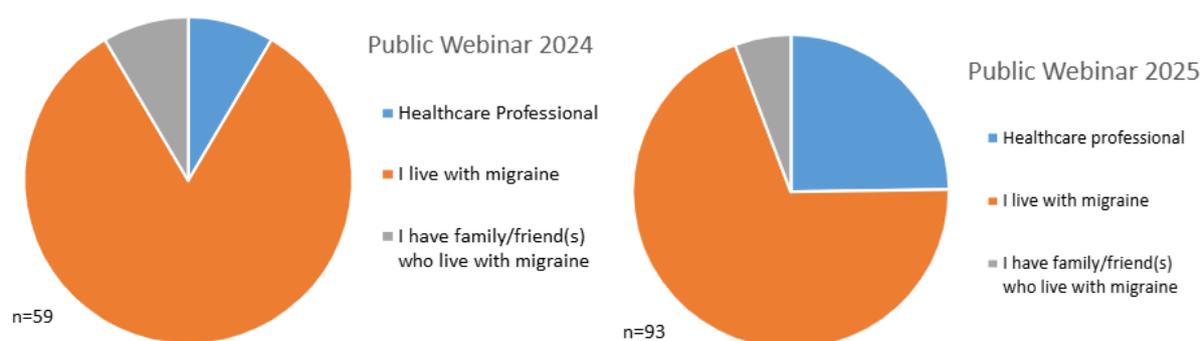


Figure 10. Public Webinar Attendances

Feedback from the public webinar attendees includes:

Thank you very much for putting all of this information in an easy to understand way. So beneficial to hear from the expert.

I've realised that I suffer from more migraine than I initially thought as some are lower down on the spectrum.

I have symptoms I had never realised were the beginnings of migraine and now know I can recognise these and take steps to manage it better

I speak to my pharmacy colleague's often about medications in various situations and really appreciate their expertise.

Public Awareness Campaigns

Input was sought from people living with migraine as well The Migraine Trust and NHS Grampians marketing teams when developing the public awareness campaigns. Key points highlighted by people living with migraine were:

- Recognising that migraine is not just a headache
- How migraine can present
- The impact the condition can have on a person
- Signposting to support

After the initial campaign in January 2024, a public survey found that some of the methods used in the campaign did not improve awareness as effectively as planned. 83% of responders had not heard the radio advertisement and 100% had not seen one of the three large billboards. Conversely 75% had seen the billboards on the rear of buses in Aberdeen city. The resounding feedback from 58% of responders was that the messaging on social media had been most useful.

Following on from this recommendation for more social media usage the service improvement has been promoted more consistently through the platforms via NHS Grampian Realistic Medicines Facebook and Instagram pages which have an average combined reach of 9,000 per month since 1 August 2024. Reach is defined as the number of unique users who view a piece of content.

Since it began on 20 January 2025, the Phase 2 awareness campaign has focused on social media promotion on Meta of migraine, pharmacy support and the public webinar. Table 4 outlines the reach that has been achieved for each health board in the first three weeks of the campaign compared to the predicted reach over the entire ten-week campaign.

Region	Reach after three weeks	Ten-week campaign predicted reach
Grampian	58,688	125,000
Highland	23,678	50,000
Tayside	45,385	100,000
Lanarkshire	118,730	183,333
Lothian	202,081	287,500
Shetland & Orkney	4,304	7,333

Table 4. Phase 2 Meta awareness campaign reach

Artroom Sessions

In September and October 2024 two artroom and two creative writing workshops were held, targeted to people living with migraine are being held in Grampian. There were 21 attendees across the events. Feedback for the sessions were very positive as seen below, with attendees rating their overall experience at sessions as 5/5. Examples of the works produces can be seen in figure 11.

I appreciate this type of event being run for this diagnosis - the information & campaign throughout September on Migraine awareness has meant a lot to me

An environment where I felt able and safe to share how migraine impacts my life.

Session helped me off load some of the stresses I hold with me thanks to living with the condition.

Great to meet others who were feeling the same and listen to how they dealt with life with migraine.



Figure 11. Pictures produced during the Artroom Migraine sessions

Patient Stories

To summarise the impact the service improvement has had on patients over the life of the project the public were invited to complete a survey and subsequent case study. Key Improvements from pharmacy interactions reported by responders to the survey were:

1. Pharmacists provided personalised advice and support, leading to better management strategies.
2. Pharmacists helped adjust medications and dosages, improving the effectiveness of treatments.
3. Regular interactions with pharmacists allowed for ongoing monitoring and adjustments, leading to better long-term management.
4. Pharmacists facilitated access to new treatments and medications, providing more options for managing migraine.
5. Pharmacists considered the overall health and other conditions of the patients, leading to more comprehensive care.

These interactions highlight the valuable role pharmacists play in improving migraine management through personalised care, medication adjustments, and ongoing support.

Some of the case studies completed by individuals living with migraine can be found in appendix 1.

Impact on Secondary Care

A high level review of the patients who have been referred to the headache clinic at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (new or return) and vetted to an outpatient Clinic waiting list (new or return) by Neurology between February 2016 and January 2025 was conducted to determine if the availability of support from pharmacy teams has had any impact on referral numbers and/or quality. The data and a graph of the trend found can be seen in figure 12.

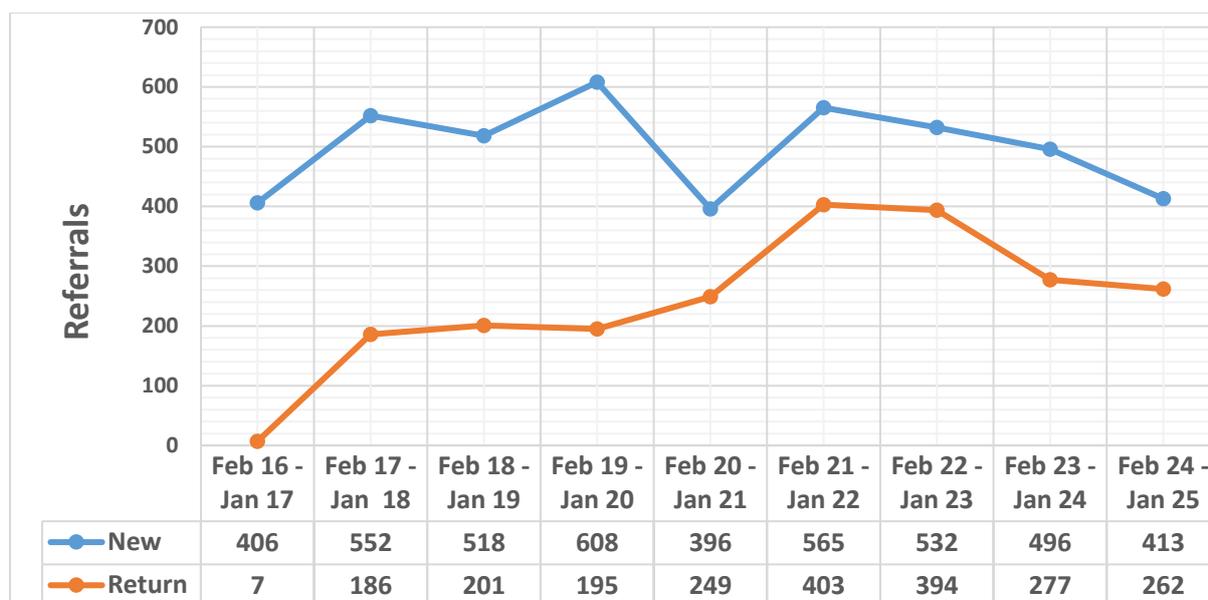


Figure 12. Headache Clinic referrals

Overall, the data shows a small improvement in both new and return patient referral numbers to the headache clinic since the project began in January 2023. However, a review of the data must acknowledge that the factors below may have impacted the data:

1. that the impact of Covid measures have likely skewed the data in February 2020 - January 2021 and that in the year after this, February 2021 - January 2022, there has been a negative impact on the data
2. that as the project training began in September 2023 it is likely too soon to definitively conclude that there has been any impact on referral numbers
3. the launch of the Scottish National Headache Pathway in October 2023 and updated Grampian Guidance in October 2024 may have positively impacted the data
4. migraine awareness is being actively promoted in Grampian by Headache Specialists and Pharmaceutical companies external to the project

Anecdotally, feedback suggests that there has been an improvement in referral quality. One clinician reporting that they are seeing less patients needing acute therapy and more looking for prophylaxis which would suggest that pharmacists are managing acute treatment better and that patients are more aware re prophylaxis either from their pharmacist or from the patient webinars.

A more robust review of the quality and number of referrals could be done in the coming years to show if there is any direct impact from the service improvement.

Sustainability

Funding was sought from the Scottish Government Neurological Care & Support Framework for a further phase of the project which proposed a third project year to achieve a Once for Scotland integrated and sustainable embedding of the approach.

In order to achieve full roll out across Scotland and to ensure equity of provision and deliver value-based health and care for those living with migraine, five key objectives were recommended:

1. Deliver training and resources to minimum 25% of community pharmacy staff (based on available workforce data) in remaining territorial boards (Ayrshire and Arran, Borders, Forth Valley, Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Western Isles)
2. Deliver public awareness campaigns via territorial boards corporate communication teams (or alternative local mechanism)
3. Deliver national public information webinar to minimum of 800 live attendees, with themes identified from those with lived experience of migraine.
4. Deliver online follow-up learning session, content based on feedback from pharmacy teams
5. Develop a national mechanism (new or building on existing infrastructure) to home the continued roll out, refresh and update of training resources

No further funding has been made available.

Legacy and sustainability have featured in project planning from the outset and are now key to the continued improvement of the service throughout Scotland. The following examples offer a flavour of how this has been built into the project to date:

- Development of Turas landing page to host resources, to enable access to these beyond the initial live sessions.
- Streamlining of NHS Grampian public-facing headache webpage, removing locally developed patient information leaflets and replacing with links to trusted sources. This reduces future demand on clinicians' time to review and refresh resources and reduces unwarranted variation in information.
- Recording patient information webinar and having this publicly available via The Migraine Trusts YouTube channel. NHS Grampian Realistic Medicine Social Media communication plan includes this as a regular scheduled post
- Collaborating with NHS Education for Scotland to develop additional resources and to handover hosting of education assets in the long-term, to ensure these remain up to date and allow national data collection of interaction.
- Collaboration with Higher Education Institutes to share resources for undergraduate and postgraduate pharmacy courses.
- Presenting the project at national conferences including the national Realistic Medicine Conferences, NES Annual Conferences, Association of British Neurologists Annual Meeting, and Migraine Trust International Symposium. The project will also be presented at the upcoming Pharmacy in Practice Conference.
- Collaborating with NHS Grampian Wellbeing, Culture and Development team to support the organisation to sign up to and uphold The Migraine Trust Workplace pledge.
- Presenting the project at the visit of Jenni Minto MSP, Minister for Public Health and Women, during a visit to NHS Grampian.

- Collaborating with key networks to endorse and promote further spread of approach (including NHS Scotland Directors of Pharmacy; Community Pharmacy Scotland; NHS Education for Scotland; Scottish Neurology Leads Group (pharmacy)).
- Commitment from NHS Grampian headache specialists and The Migraine Trust to hold future public webinars
- Commitment from NHS Grampian headache specialists and pharmacy directorate to hold future live workshops which will be open to all health and social care staff.

The project design and its resources have been shared with experts outside of Scotland and there is now interest in exploring the potential for local pilots in England which The Migraine Trust are supporting.

Project Recognition

- Conservative MP Dehenna Davison mentioned that the project has "seen partnerships forged with community primary and secondary care pharmacists" in a House of Commons debate in March 2024.
- Within NHS Grampian the project won a NHS Grampian Staff Thanks and Recognition (STAR) award in October 2024.
- Representing NHS Grampian at the Scottish Healthcare Awards the project won the award for Innovation in Neurology in November 2024.
- Also in November 2024, Kevin Stewart MSP raised a motion in the Scottish Parliament highlighting the project's success in improving migraine management and promoting public awareness of migraine and community pharmacy resources through collaboration with The Migraine Trust.

Conclusion

The *Partnering with pharmacy teams to improve migraine management* project has demonstrated significant success in enhancing the support and treatment available for people living with migraine through community pharmacy teams. The focused training provided to pharmacy staff has markedly improved their confidence and skills in managing migraine, with 100% of attendees reporting a good understanding and confidence post-training. Moreover, through open training sessions and resources this upskilling has been used throughout Scotland and within many other roles.

Public engagement has been consciously embedded to strengthen the project, resulting in awareness campaigns, patient resources and accessible services which has led to improved quality of life for patients as demonstrated by patient stories. The NHS Grampian Migraine webpage and public webinars have reached a wide audience, further spreading awareness and education about migraine management, evidenced by evaluation data.

Project management leadership underpinned by theory of change has established and sustained the project's collaborative approach. Involving pharmacists, headache specialists, The Migraine Trust, and people living with migraine, has been instrumental in shaping effective training and resources. This collaboration has also fostered positive involvement from all stakeholder groups, contributing to the project's overall success.

The importance of project management leaders can be seen when reflecting on the challenges faced by partnership boards who did not have this in place. Progress was slower in these areas, with busy clinicians unable to give the time required to steer the project.

The project has influenced changes in practice among pharmacy and primary care colleagues, leading to better awareness, recognition, and accessibility of support for people living with migraine. From anecdotal clinician feedback, the project has also influenced changes in individual health behaviours relating to migraine recognition. The integration of training and resources into undergraduate learning at RGU and Strathclyde University ensures that future pharmacists will be well-equipped to manage migraine effectively.

Difficulty in accessing robust data and the short lifecycle of the project have made it difficult to confidently say that this pathway improvement has made a significant impact at service level. However, the *Partnering with pharmacy teams to improve migraine management* project has laid a strong foundation for continued improvement in migraine care, demonstrating the vital role of community pharmacy teams in providing accessible, effective and meaningful support for people living with migraine.

Appendix 1.

Patient Stories

Patient Story 1

I came across the migraine webinar for patients on Facebook and decided to join to learn more about managing my migraine. I've suffered from migraine for a long time and used to try push through them, making them worse usually in the process. During the webinar, I discovered various treatments and strategies to better manage my symptoms. This has made a significant difference for me, and I'm experiencing fewer migraine now that I'm applying what I learned having identified my triggers.

Patient Story 2

During 2018, I visited my GP four times with never ending sinusitis symptoms. On each occasion, I was prescribed various antibiotics, nasal congestion sprays along with advice to undertake nasal washing with saline water which I followed but did not feel any improvement. In early 2019, I was referred to Ear Nose and Throat for a nasal endoscopy. This was done in September 2019. It was not a pleasant experience and did not identify any visible cause for my sinus pain and congestion. At the appointment, I was prescribed a 6-week course of antibiotics, which again made no difference. My GP then gave me two further 6-week courses of antibiotics and sprays which again did not make any difference.

I work full time and in 2020, I told my GP I was struggling to concentrate with the constant pain, congestion and had developed a feeling of brain fog. I was re-referred to Ear Nose and Throat, scoped which again found nothing and given a further course of antibiotics with no benefit. I was told that I had chronic sinusitis and suggested to consider dietary changes like cutting out dairy. I did this, along with cutting out alcohol and coffee and still had congestion and headaches. By this stage, I had lived with pain and congestion most days for 3 years. I had also taken many weeks off work on sick leave. I decided at this point just to live with it as I had tried everything.

In 2023, I learned of the migraine project and through resources available I realised that my symptoms were consistent with migraine and that aspirin might help. I tried this and for the first time in 3 years, my headaches and congestion were relieved. Doing this has been so successful that I have not returned to my GP about this issue. I have since learned that migraine can appear or worsen around perimenopause, so this has also helped me understand my current wider health and wellbeing.

I would like to say that what I have discovered because of this project has been absolutely life changing. I cannot iterate enough how taking simple (and cheap) aspirin has cleared my headaches, congestion and helped me identify I was entering menopause.

Patient Story 3

I'm 54 years old and work as the practise manager in a large GP surgery. I have a large family and a fairly busy social life and enjoy walking my dogs and sports like tennis. Migraine has had a big impact on my life. Having to take at least day out of my life to deal with the effect of migraine, often a second day 2 in the after effect continues to affect my day-to-day life.

Before I took part in the project's focus group in July 2023, my migraine was mainly managed by medication.

Since attending the focus group, I now have more of an awareness of triggers and signs that a migraine is imminent and them able to deal more effectively with my migraine. Still usually with medication but also changing my lifestyle and working life.

This is positively impacted my life. My migraine do not take as long to get over, therefore not impacting so much in my day-to-day life.

I found it beneficial to talk with others, some with much worse migraine experiences than mine. This helped me to identify triggers to my migraine and just make me much more aware of symptoms to look out for.

By talking to others and sharing experiences I noticed that there are signs that I'm getting a migraine they hadn't identified before.

Patient story 4

I'm 36 and I live with my partner and children in Aberdeenshire. I am an avid reader, classically trained choral singer and sports enthusiast.

As I've had migraine from a young age, I had become accustomed to living with chronic pain and managing the condition myself. I've suffered from chronic migraine for the last six years especially, which has had an adverse effect on both work and home life. I can often be absent from work if having a particularly bad migraine attack and regularly miss family activities.

When I was younger, I relied on over the counter remedies such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. My migraine come with nausea, sensitivity to noise, light and smell as well as tiredness and brain fog so I often have to sleep to feel better. As I got older and consulted with my GP, I was prescribed 2 preventative treatments and a Triptan for acute treatment. Eventually I had to change my Triptan as it became less effective.

In January 2023, I attended the "Understanding migraine treatments and accessing Grampian support" webinar which provided me with information on treatment options, self-management and accessing support. It gave me reassurance that my self-management techniques were appropriate and provided me with medication combinations I could try during an acute attack as well as when to take my medication. I had a medication review with my GP practise following the webinar and the healthcare professional I'd spoken to had also been at the webinar. They were able to advise me that I met the criteria for Rimegepant, a new acute treatment.

The new management plan changed my migraine from chronic to episodic and had a positive influence in my life. My migraine reduced to 1 migraine in 1-2 weeks rather than 2+ migraine every week and significantly improved my quality of life. My work has been less affected by my migraine attacks and I'm able to enjoy more time headache free with my family.

Recently I've had an increase in attacks due to fluctuations in barometric pressure and having more awareness around preventive treatment I contacted my GP practise for advice.

I feel more empowered around the management of my condition and know that support is available for me when I need it. The increased awareness about treatment options and support has made me feel like I don't have to suffer in silence. I am forever grateful to the Realistic Medicine team in the Migraine Trust for investing their time and expertise into this project to help those living with migraine in Grampian.

Appendix 2

Project Budget

2023 project costs	
Project management	£71,889
Travel and Accommodation	£1,380
Awareness campaign	£10,960
Patient literature	£982
Training costs	£463
Total	£85,675

2024 project costs	
Project management	£89,001
Travel and Accommodation	£2,500
Awareness campaign	£24,000
e-learning module	£12,000
Materials (patients / pharmacists)	£5,000
Art project	£1,250
Other	£1,750
Total	£135,501



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