



Healthcare
Improvement
Scotland

SHTG
Advice on health
technologies

gammaCore for cluster headache

Plain Language Summary | SHTG Adaptation 01-21 | January 2021

What is cluster headache?

Cluster headache is a rare type of headache that can cause severe pain and a great degree of suffering for a person.

What is gammaCore?

gammaCore is a portable, handheld device that a person can use on their own. It is applied to the neck and delivers a small electric current which may relieve pain.

What is our recommendation to NHSScotland?

gammaCore should be available for a 3-month trial for people experiencing cluster headaches. We know that gammaCore is not effective in everyone with cluster headache, and treatment should only continue for people whose symptoms reduce in the first 3 months.

Why is this important?

It is estimated that around 5,400 people in Scotland experience cluster headaches. Of these, around 270 may not be helped by medication. gammaCore is safe to use and may reduce the number or intensity of headache attacks. This could reduce the need for medication and lead to improvements in quality of life.

What we did

An organisation from England called National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), published guidance on this topic in December 2019. NICE follows very similar processes to SHTG to develop advice, and has the same function in England as SHTG does in Scotland. We used, and built on the work that NICE did, to produce recommendations for Scotland including consulting with Scottish experts to ensure that the guidance was relevant and meaningful to NHSScotland.

What we found

NICE guidance supports the use of gammaCore in people with cluster headaches.

The evidence suggested that for some people with cluster headaches, using gammaCore led to fewer, or less intense headaches. It could also mean less medication is needed.

We found that the NICE guidance is suitable for adaptation in Scotland. The Scottish experts we worked with agreed with the NICE guidance and felt that a similar recommendation in Scotland was needed.

What SHTG considered when developing advice for NHSScotland

We considered whether the NICE guidance was good quality, and whether it was applicable to Scotland. We thought about what additional information was needed, and what changes would be required, to make the recommendation work for NHSScotland. For example, we thought about the barriers there may be to implementing the recommendations in Scotland and whether gammaCore would offer good value for money in Scotland.

Future work

Analysis of ongoing costs of gammaCore will show us whether gammaCore offers good value for money to NHSScotland.

This plain language summary has been produced based on SHTG Adaptation 01
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