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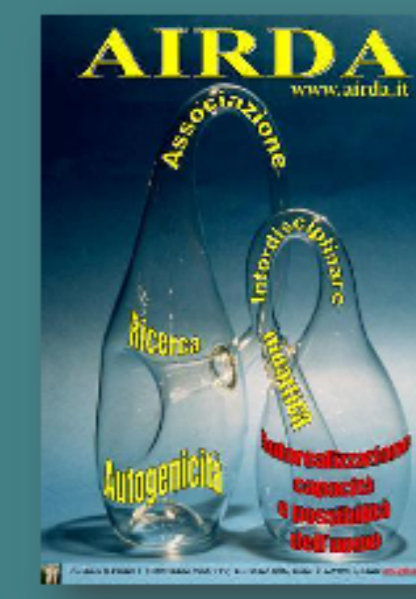
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# THE EFFICACY OF AUTOGENIC TRAINING ON TENSION-TYPE HEADACHE AND MIGRAINE SYMPTOMS. A STUDY ON 568 CASES

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## Introduction

Autogenic Training (AT) is a technique that has been found to be effective in many areas, both from a medical/physical and psychological point of view.

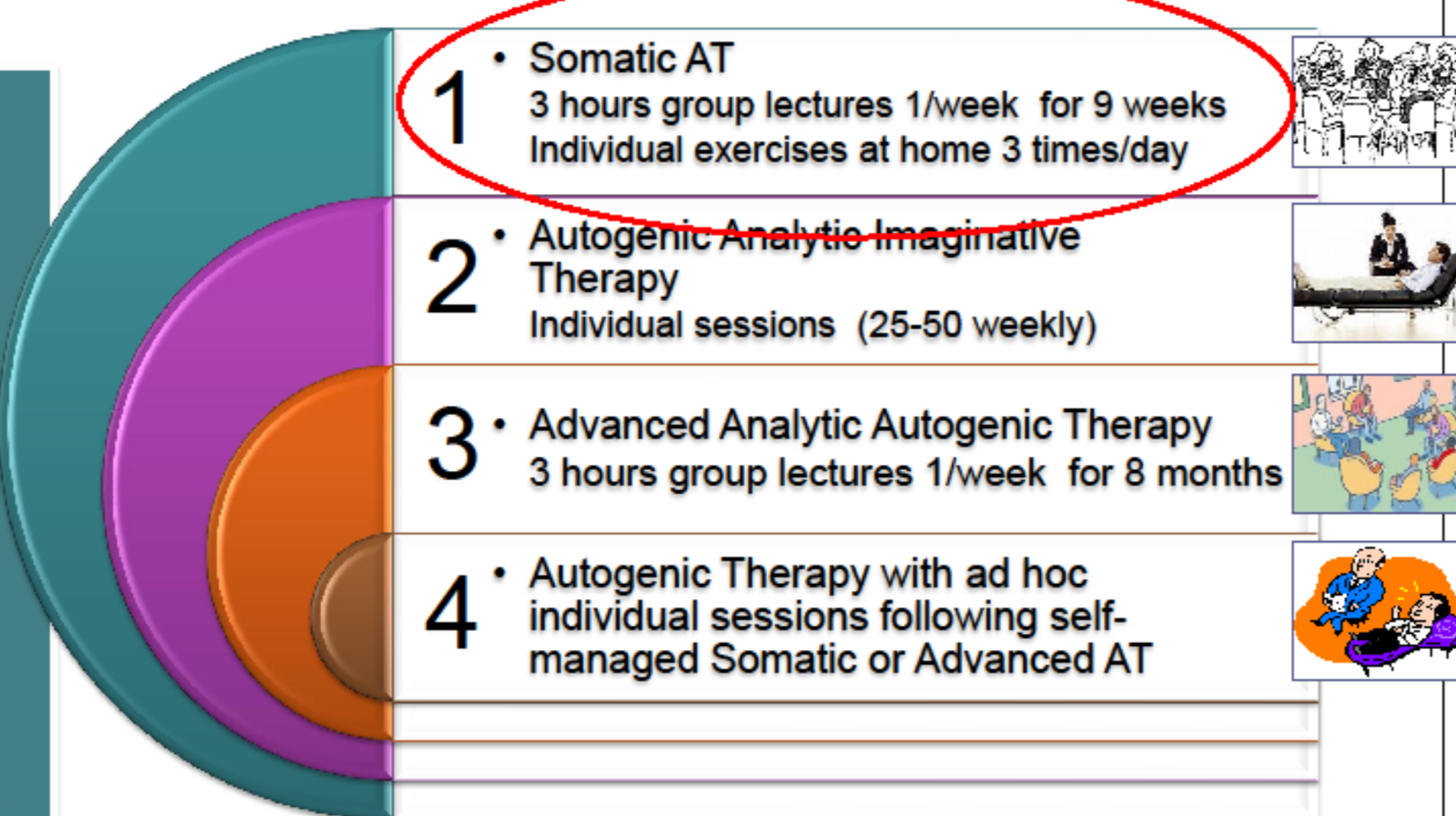
Through the internal repetition of standard phrases (exercises) AT enables the person to switch from the aroused state of the autonomic nervous system sympathetic activity to the relaxed energy re-charging state of the parasympathetic activity

- In a recent review that included sixty studies, AT has been found to be an effective practice in many physical or psychosomatic disorders such as asthma bronchialis, hypertension, tension-type headache and migraine, coronary heart disease, Raynaud's disease (Stetter and Kupper 2002).
- The same review also supports AT as effective in anxiety, mild-to-moderate depression and functional sleep disorder.
- An even more recent review (Manzoni et al, 2008) confirms its effectiveness, along with other relaxation techniques, in helping reducing anxiety.
- However studies with more than 200 subjects are extremely rare.
- We present a study evaluating the efficacy of the AT for tension-type headaches and migraine symptoms in a cohort of 568 patients.

## Methods

We evaluated the results of AT on patients that completed the first of the 4-Steps "Gastaldo-Ottobre" AT path (Da Ronch, Gastaldo et al. 2010).

**The Gastaldo-Ottobre Four Steps Autogenic Training** is derived from Schultz's approach (Schultz, 1960) constituting a complete, complex, autonomous psychotherapeutic system. The **First Step** is the Somatic AT and aims at learning to listen to the body's physical messages and sensations (interoception). During a 9-week course the person learns the 6 basic exercises, the importance of regular training (2-3 times/day, even in very short sessions) and the "letting go" attitude.



### Data collected before and after each step

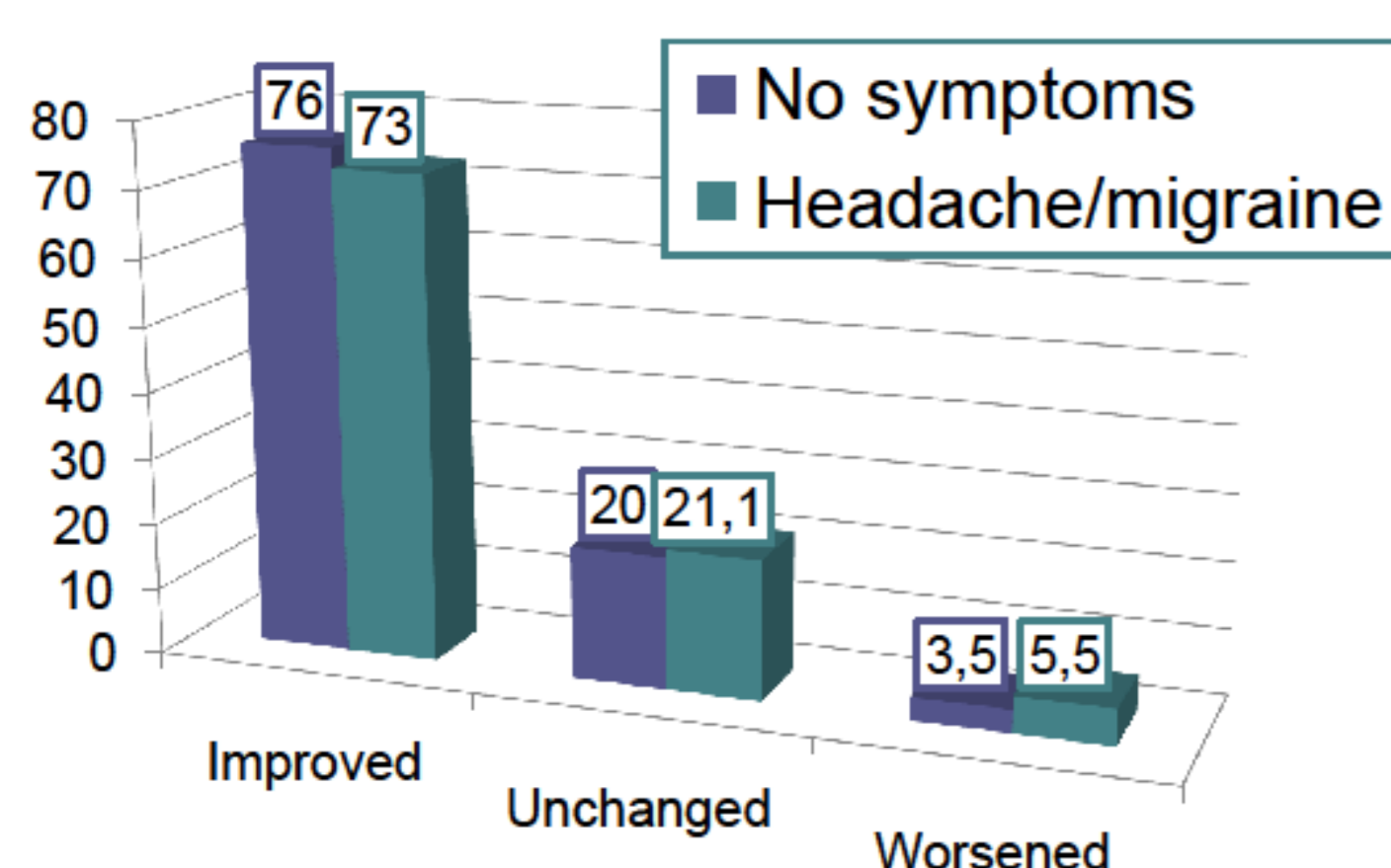
- Clinical interview
- Physical and Psychological Symptoms questionnaire
- Subjective outcome
- Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965)
- Cattell IPAT Anxiety Scale (Cattell, 1957)

## Results

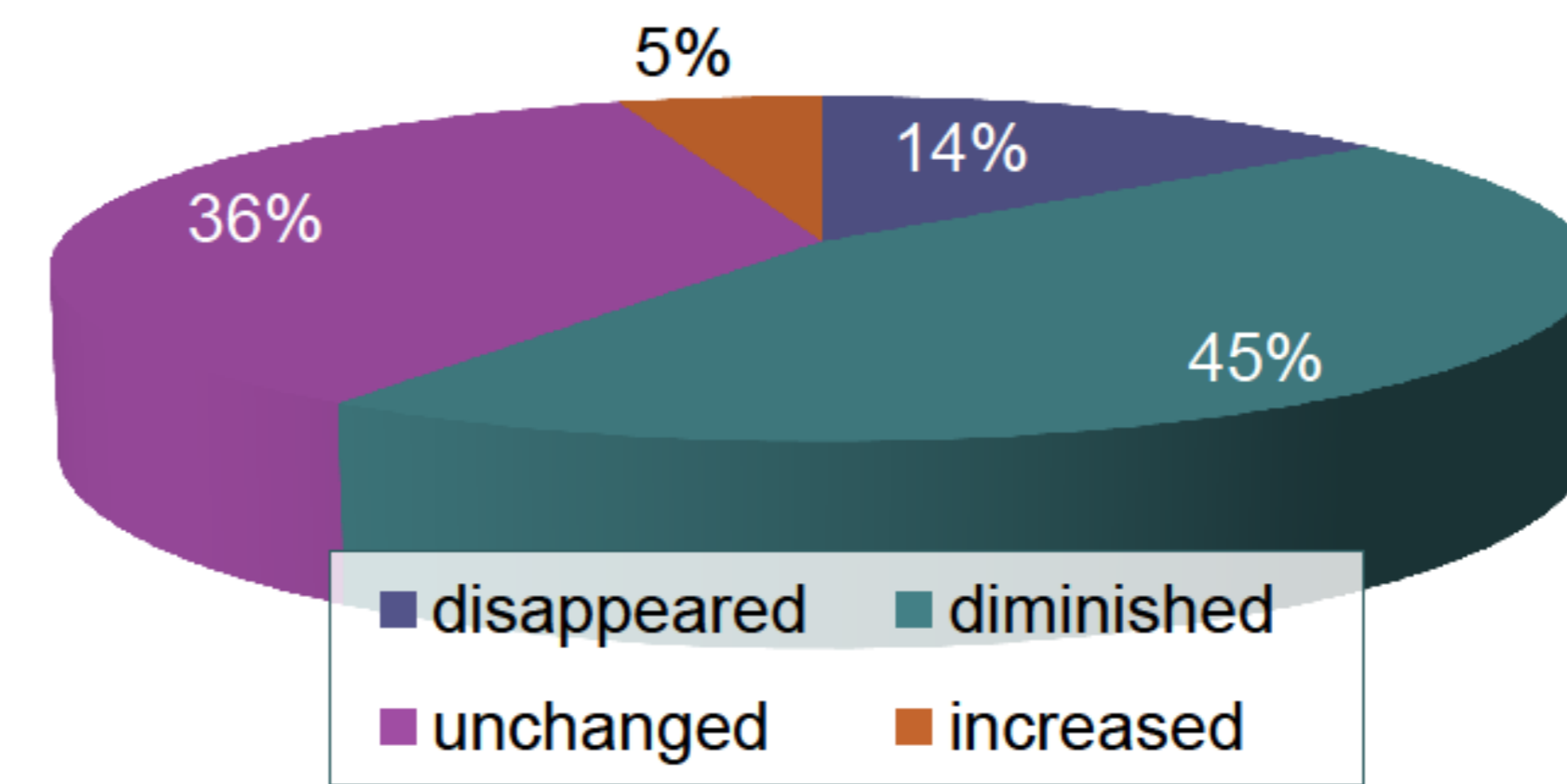
Of the total 2952 people who attended the AT course between 1980 and 2008, 1974 completed the 2-months follow-up evaluation. Of these 568 presented symptoms related to tension-type headache or migraine or both.

Filled-in questionnaires	n.	Headache/migraine
Pre-test	2952	760
Follow-up	1974	568

After the first Step (follow-up) headache/migraine patients declared **general significant improvements**, in fact 72.9% (414) referred a *subjective global improvement*, 21.1% (120) to be more or less the same, 5.5% (31) to have worsened.



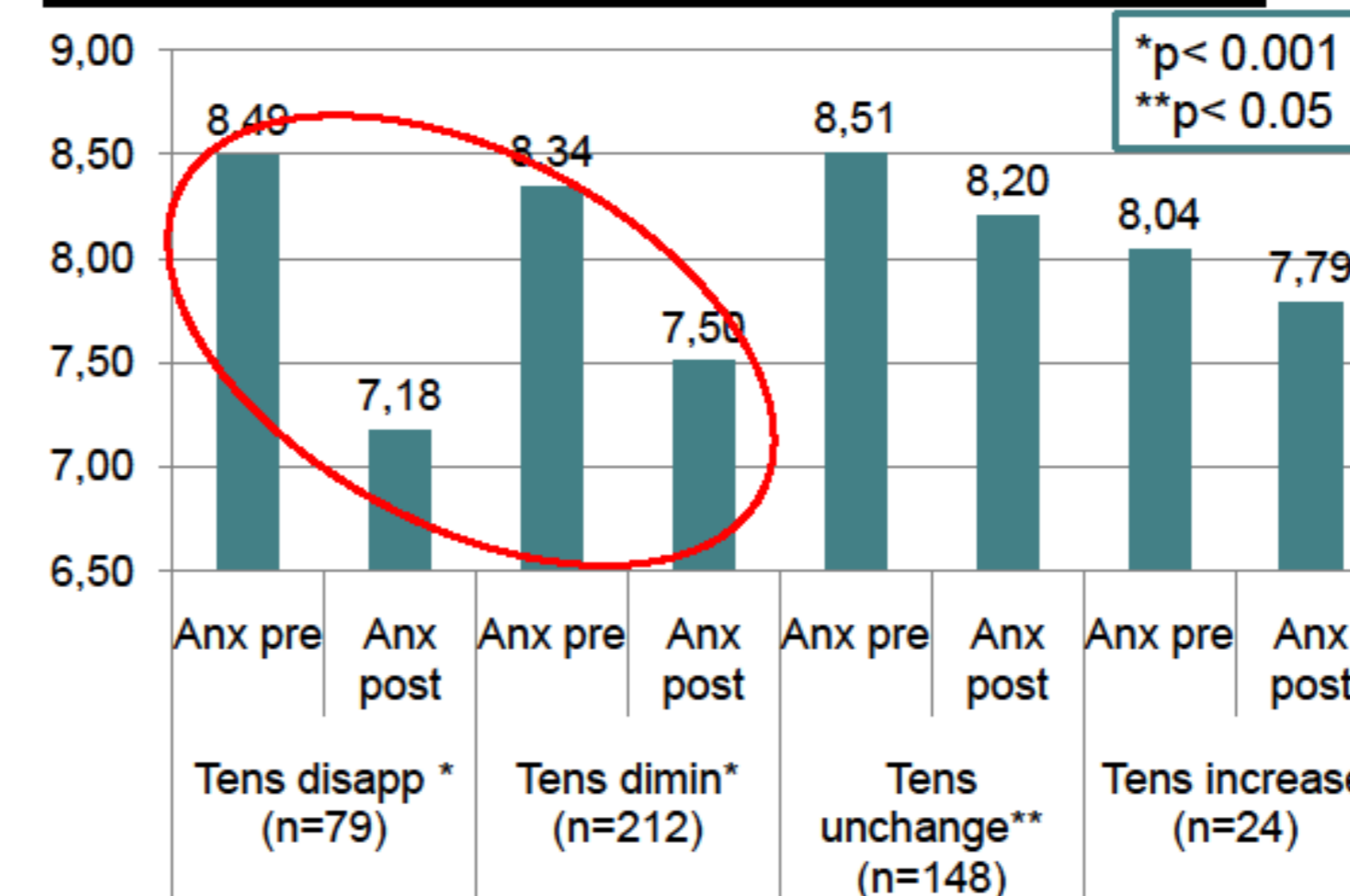
## Results cont.



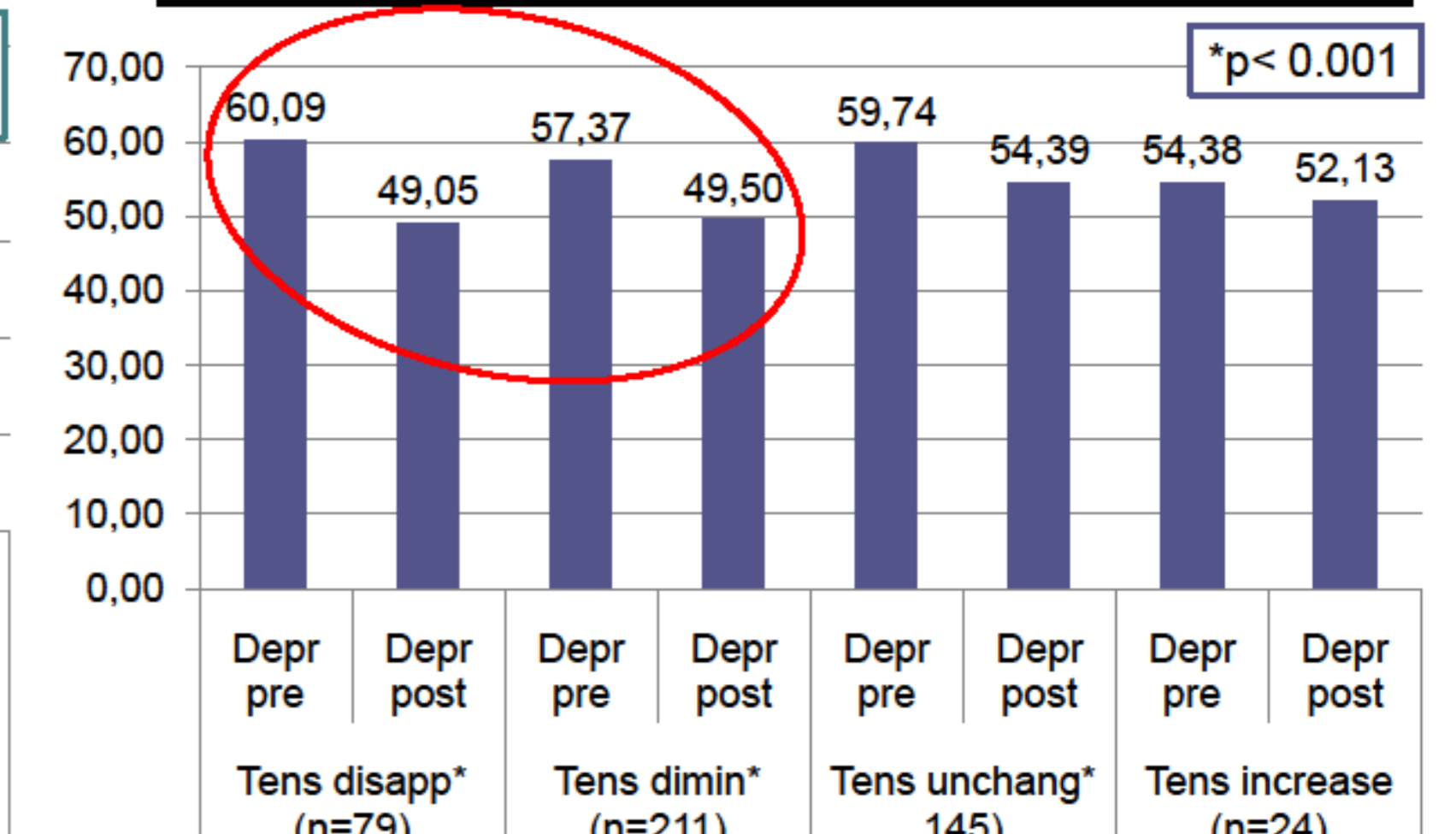
Concerning **headache and migraine symptoms**, 14.5% disappeared, 44.8% diminished intensity, 35.7% remained unchanged and 5% got worse.

We also found **significant associations between physical and psychological improvements**. By performing Paired t-test according to category of perceived changes in tension-type headache and migraine symptoms (disappeared, diminished, unchanged, increased) and level of Anxiety (IPAT test pre- and post- test) and Depression (Zung test pre- and post- test) we found that there was a generally higher improvement (i.e. higher difference pre-post) in Anxiety and Depression among the category of people who's headache and migraine symptoms were disappeared or diminished ( $p < 0.005$ ).

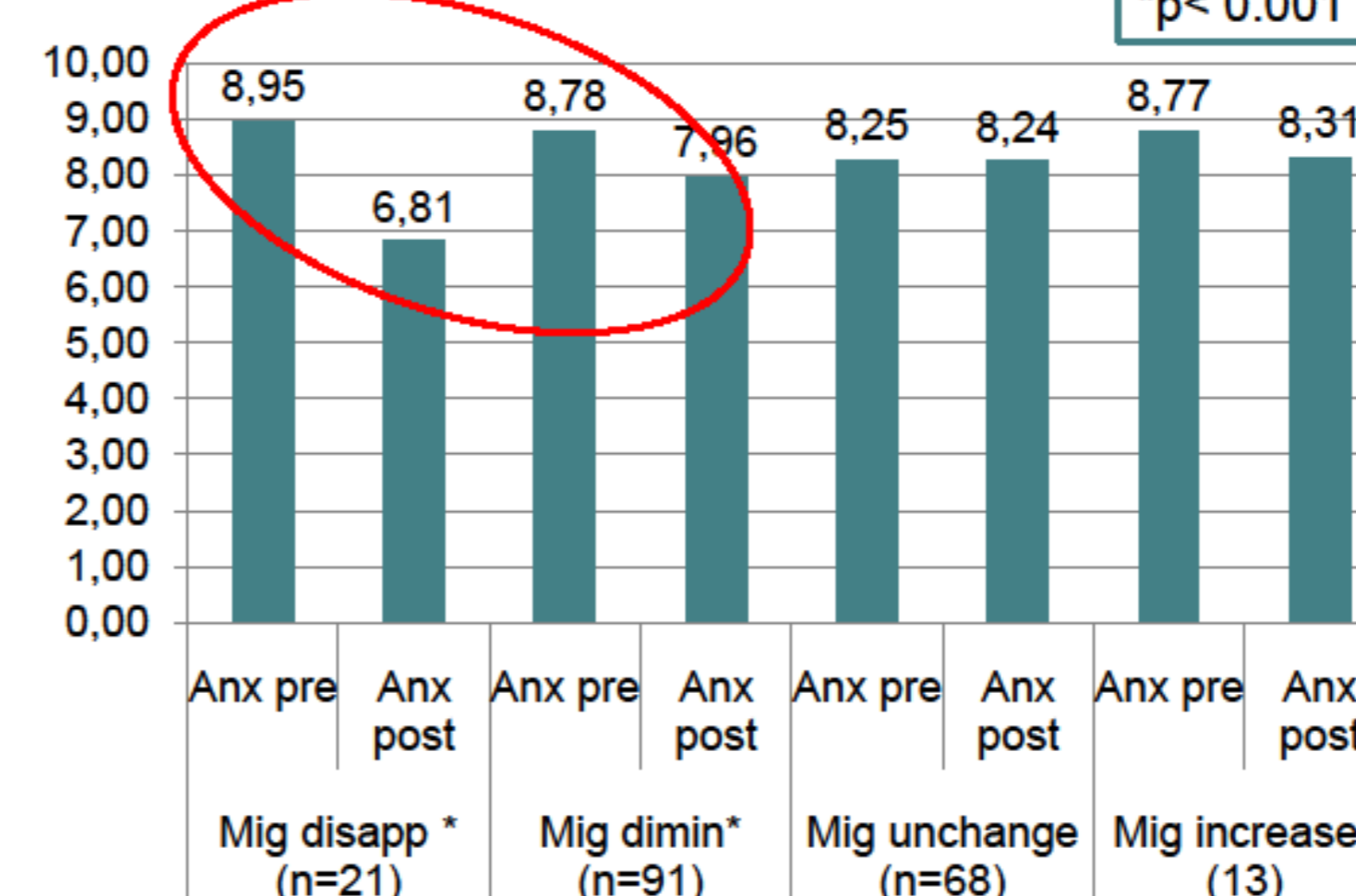
Tension-type headache symptoms and Anxiety



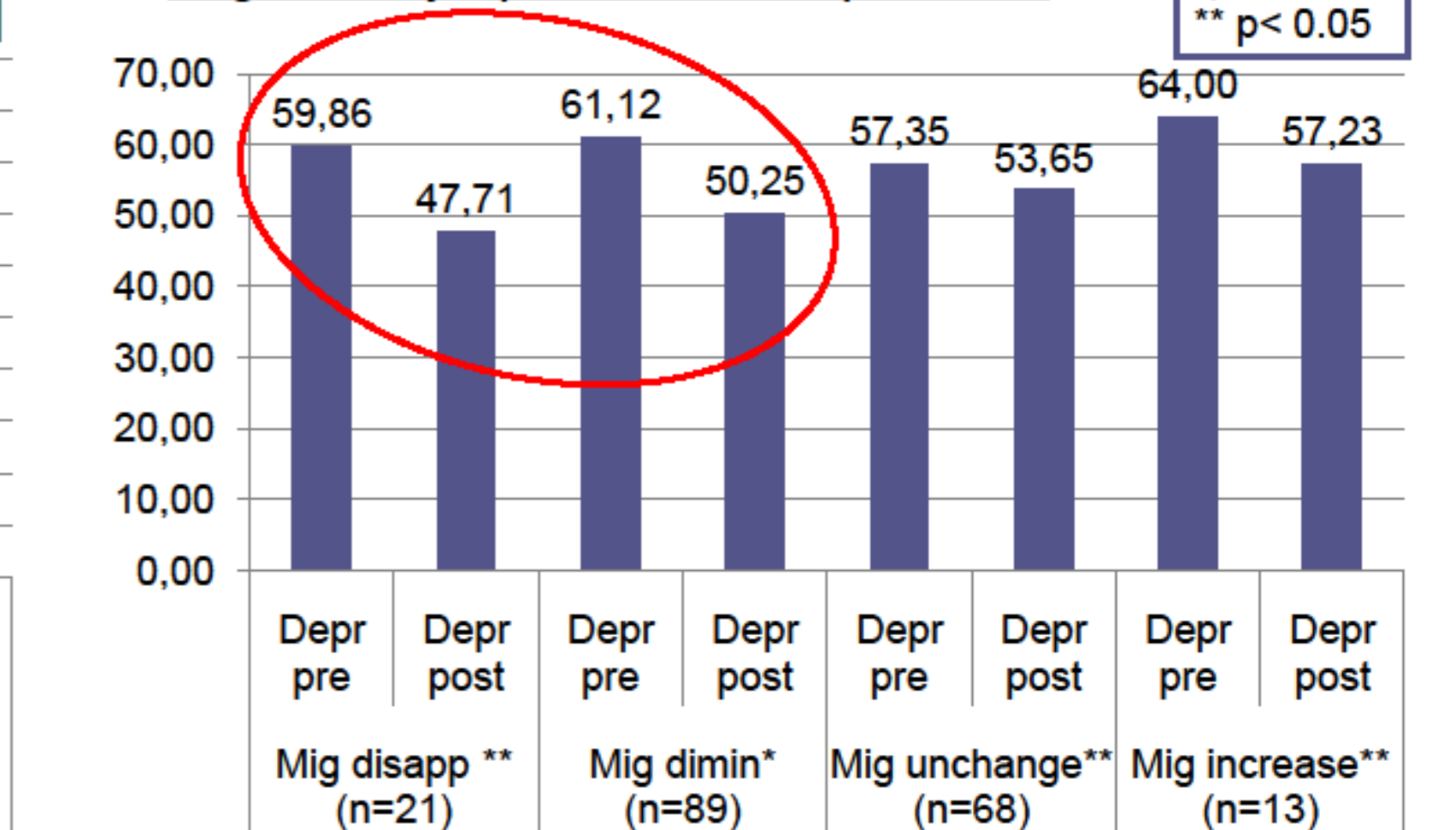
Tension-type headache symptoms and Depression



Migraine symptoms and Anxiety



Migraine symptoms and Depression



Paired t-test according to category of perceived changes in tension-type headache symptoms and level of anxiety (IPAT test pre and post test) and Depression (Zung test pre and post test).

**Conclusions.** AT can be an effective technique for dealing with symptoms such as tension-type headache and migraine. The parallel positive effects on the psychological side reinforce the idea of a reciprocal interconnection between physical and psychological well-being that can be increased through AT.

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