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MIGRAINE:

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

A
Comprehensive
Resource Book
for People
with Migraine,
Their Families,
and Physicians

9.99 CAN. \$12.99

The American Council on Headache Education
with Lynne M. Constantine & Suzanne Scott

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FOR HEADACHE EDUCATION

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To Michelle,
Elizabeth, Billy,
Stephanie, David, and
the millions of other
migraine survivors whose courage
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Foreword

As many as 23 million Americans—approximately one in five women and one in twenty men—experience migraine, a painful and often disabling headache disorder. As a physician who has spent nearly two decades treating people with migraine, I have witnessed the enormous impact this condition has on these people, their families, and society. Yet no condition of such magnitude is more shrouded in myth, misinformation, or mistreatment.

Despite the fact that headache is the seventh leading reason for consulting a physician, many people seeking help for migraine have been shunted down a corridor of endless diagnostic procedures, ineffective treatment, and unfulfilled promises.

Millions and millions of dollars are wasted and additional suffering inflicted needlessly through inappropriate and unnecessary treatment. As a result of these encounters with well-meaning but ill-informed practitioners, patients with migraine and other headache disorders have found themselves with worsened head-

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ache and with treatment-related illnesses, including surgical complications, addictive disease, and drug toxicities resulting in liver, kidney, or gastrointestinal damage. They have been sent for nasal and sinus surgery, jaw reconstruction, hysterectomy, neck surgery, allergy shots, hormonal manipulation, myotherapy, and physical therapy. Every diagnostic tool in the modern medical armamentarium has been tried in the hope of finding something to fix or remove.

The irony is that, for patients with migraine, there is nothing to find and nothing to fix. Migraine is a chronic condition, like diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. It reflects disturbances in the brain that are primary processes. And while headache can be controlled and effectively treated, the underlying disorder will be present for decades or even throughout the patient's life.

The misunderstandings and mistreatment result in much confusion and despair among patients and their families. Because a medical model for headache has been lacking, migraine patients have experienced discrimination and repudiation by insurance carriers and employers, and have been stereotyped and stigmatized by even the best-intentioned physicians, family members, and friends. These patients radically alter their lives to accommodate periods of headache-induced debility, believing that their only choice is to live with their head pain. Often they also harbor the self-defeating belief that their pain is "all in their head," because a physician has implied that their headaches are psychological in origin.

Added to these basic misunderstandings are the costs of unnecessary and often harmful treatments. Whether reckoned in money, in time, or in squandered hopes, these costs are immeasurable.

Typically, it is only after years of needless suffering that someone with difficult-to-treat headaches encounters a physician with a fundamental understanding of the disorder. Many patients who consult me have become addicted to painkillers over the years, but it is clear to me that they are not, for the most part, deliberate substance "abusers." They are the survivors of treat-

ment failure, desperately seeking ways to carry on when their physicians neither understand nor can help.

But there is cause for optimism. Headache is emerging to join the ranks of what society accepts as legitimate illness. The medical community has demonstrated a commitment to understanding and treating this pervasive and disabling condition, as shown by growing interest in the work of the American Association for the Study of Headache (AASH) and the enthusiastic response to the formation of the American Council for Headache Education (ACHE).

My colleagues in AASH and I share considerable excitement over new research confirming our view that brain disturbances and chemical changes cause headache. This new information will prompt the development of new treatments for migraine and other headache disorders and will lead to more effective use of current treatments.

I hope we can also put to rest the erroneous but common belief that headache, and particularly migraine, is primarily caused by emotional distress. Asthma, epilepsy, schizophrenia, Tourette's syndrome, autism, Alzheimer's disease, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and manic-depressive disease all were once believed to be emotional in origin. The development of research-based medical models for these conditions, however, has considerably lessened the stigma and misunderstanding associated with them.

The members of AASH founded ACHE so our patients will have access to reliable information about migraine and other headache disorders and their treatment. Through our public education efforts we also hope to change societal attitudes, so that no one will have to experience stigma and self-doubt because of a brain abnormality and its resulting symptoms.

We are still far from reaching that day, but I believe people with migraine have many reasons to take heart. Today they can find physicians who recognize that migraine is a legitimate and at times disabling condition that is not caused by stress or personality flaws or by a patient's parents. And in a growing number of

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cities across the U.S., they can find active support groups in which people with migraine share their experiences and help each other feel less ashamed and alone.

It should no longer be an embarrassment to have a headache. People with migraine deserve our respect and support, as well as the best efforts of the medical and research communities to alleviate their pain.

—Joel R. Saper, M.D., FACP
Director, Michigan Headache
and Neurological Institute
National Chairman, American Council
for Headache Education

Introduction

If you or someone you love is among the millions of people who experience migraine headaches, you may feel that migraine controls your existence. This book is an invitation to take back that control and move on to a more satisfying life.

Migraine: The Complete Guide is an authoritative source of information, support, and practical help for anyone who suffers from migraine. It is based on the best information available: the findings of medical research, the clinical experience of leading experts on migraine, and the personal stories of dozens of migraine sufferers interviewed specifically for this book. It is a comprehensive resource to help you understand the illness of migraine and find effective treatment.

If you follow the recommendations in this book, you can almost certainly look forward to a future with fewer migraine attacks, a reduced intensity of attacks, and lessened fear that a headache will disable you without warning or recourse.