

Practical Assessment and Treatment of the Patient with Headaches in the Emergency Department and Urgent Care Clinic

Dawn A. Marcus • Philip A. Bain

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Preface

Headache is a nearly universal symptom. Migraine, one of the most common types of headache, affects 28 million Americans, including one in six adult women. In 2006, headache accounted for nearly 3% of all emergency department (ED) visits, resulting in almost 3.4 million visits. It was the sixth most common reason for ED visits that year.

Currently, there are no widely used guidelines for the treatment of patients with headache in the ED or Urgent Care Clinic. In one study, 35 drugs, alone or in combination, were used to treat migraine, with narcotics the most commonly selected therapy. Lack of specific training in managing headache patients and the need to efficiently move patients through a busy ED can result in significant frustration for the ED staff confronted with the patient complaining of an acute headache.

During our research for this book, we surveyed practicing ED doctors and asked what they found most frustrating about headache patients and what would most help them improve their care of ED patients complaining of headache. The answers to these surveys provided consistent themes:

- ED doctors are frustrated with patients with chronic headache who come to the ED requesting narcotic therapy.
- ED doctors are concerned about missing the diagnosis of serious, life-threatening headaches.
- ED doctors would like to improve communication with primary care physicians and neurologists treating headache patients as outpatients.
- Practical strategies are needed for understanding what outpatient providers prefer their patients receive when treated in the ED for chronic headache. Mechanisms are also needed to provide feedback to outpatient clinicians.
- ED doctors would like practical advice about using a wide variety of effective headache treatment options, including procedures like occipital nerve blocks and nondrug therapies.
- ED doctors would like to help patients get appropriate timely outpatient follow-up and help patients understand that a definitive diagnosis and care should be provided through post-ED follow-up care.

- ED doctors would like to be able to significantly decrease unnecessary return visits for headache treatment.

We have tried to address each of these concerns in this book. While the convention throughout the book is to refer to ED patients, ED care, etc., these same principles may also be applied to headache patients seen in Urgent Care Clinics.

Practical Assessment and Treatment of the Patient with Headaches in the Emergency Department and Urgent Care Clinic was designed with the practicing ED provider in mind. This book draws upon both clinical expertise and an extensive published literature to provide clinicians with recommendations for effective and efficient care of the ED headache patient. Co-authored by Drs. Dawn A. Marcus and Philip A. Bain, this book provides information from both headache specialty research as well as experience in primary care. Dr. Dawn Marcus is a neurologist, headache specialist, and professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Philip Bain is a general internist in a large multispecialty group in Madison, WI, who has a longstanding interest in treatment of headache disorders at the primary care level. Together, Drs. Marcus and Bain draw on over 40 years of clinical experience caring for patients with headache. Drs. Marcus and Bain have previously collaborated in writing two other practical books on managing headache: *Effective Migraine Treatment in Pregnant and Lactating Women* and *The Woman's Migraine Toolkit. Managing Headaches from Puberty to Menopause*.

Practical Assessment and Treatment of the Patient with Headaches in the Emergency Department and Urgent Care Clinic uses easy-to-understand figures, charts, and algorithms to help make this book a practical resource, with downloadable tools (including patient handouts) available at the Publisher's web site at <http://extras.springer.com>. Photographs showing techniques for diagnostic as well as headache-relieving procedures and commonly encountered imaging abnormalities are also included. Two unique features of this book are the focus on post-ED follow-up care to reduce unnecessary repeat visits for the same headache and a risk management chapter that addresses issues such as how to deal with inappropriate demands for opioid pain killers, common cognitive errors, and how to avoid common legal pitfalls in the ED. *Practical Assessment and Treatment of the Patient with Headaches in the Emergency Department and Urgent Care Clinic* addresses the full spectrum of headaches seen in the ED, including chronic migraine, traumatic headaches, secondary headaches, and headaches occurring in pediatric, obstetric, and older adult patients.

The authors welcome your comments about this book, your experiences, and information on other proven methods that would be helpful for future editions. Comments can be left at <http://www.dawnmarcusmd.com>.

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