MIGRAINE SPECIALISTS UNAWARE THAT BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT CAN PREVENT ATTACKS IN SOME PATIENTS

Biofeedback, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Relaxation Training are Underutilized Despite Having “Grade A” Evidence of Efficacy, Says New Study from the American Headache Society

LOS ANGELES, June 20, 2012 -- Other than psychologists, most migraine treatment specialists are unaware that behavioral treatments possess “Grade A” evidence for migraine prevention, according to a new study from the American Headache Society (AHS) presented here this week at the Society’s 54th Annual Scientific Sessions. The study surveyed AHS members about their knowledge and beliefs about the use of behavioral treatments for migraine.

Some 500 of the world’s most eminent migraine and headache specialists are expected to attend the AHS scientific meeting. This year’s theme, “Planting the Seed for Future Headache Research” spotlights other areas of current basic and clinical research such as the role of the cortex in migraine, the role of imaging in patients with headache, the latest breaking science emerging from the nation’s leading scientific laboratories in migraine research, and controversial issues in the diagnosis and management of complex headache disorders.

“We found low rates of referrals among migraine treatment specialists for behavioral treatments for their patients,” said Robert A. Nicholson, PhD, lead author of the study, of Mercy Health Research in St. Louis. “Reasons may include both a lack of knowledge about the value of such treatment as much as a lack of available referral services in local communities.”

He said that two-thirds of specialists said they routinely assess patients for depression and more than half assess for anxiety, but only 30% assess for abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder, both of which are associated with migraine.

“It’s not surprising that migraine specialists who were also mental health professionals were more likely to refer patients for behavioral treatment,” he said. “But the overall referral rate for non-pharmacologic treatment was below 25%, with stress management, relaxation training, and psychotherapy being the most common reason for referral.” AHS president Elizabeth Loder, MD, MPH, said the results of this study highlight the underuse of evidence-based behavioral treatments for migraine.

“Behavioral therapies

-more-
Behavioral Treatments May Help Prevent Migraine

are often helpful for conditions other than migraine, such as anxiety or depression, and they are typically well-tolerated. They offer a broad range of benefits and a narrower range of harms than most drug treatments for headache.”

Other study authors include Dawn C. Buse, PhD and Richard B. Lipton of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Frank Andrasik, PhD of the University of Memphis, and C. Mark Sollars of the Montefiore Medical Center.

Some 36 million Americans suffer from migraine, more than have asthma or diabetes combined. An additional 6 million suffer from chronic migraine, where patients experience at least 15 headache days per month along with other disabling neurological symptoms. Migraine can be extremely disabling and costly - accounting for more than $20 billion each year in the United States. Costs are attributed to direct medical expenses (e.g. doctor visits, medications) and indirect expenses (e.g. missed work, lost productivity).

ABOUT THE AMERICAN HEADACHE SOCIETY
The American Headache Society (AHS) is a professional society of health care providers dedicated to the study and treatment of headache and face pain. The Society's objectives are to promote the exchange of information and ideas concerning the causes and treatments of headache and related painful disorders. Educating physicians, health professionals and the public and encouraging scientific research are the primary functions of this organization. AHS activities include an annual scientific meeting, a comprehensive headache symposium, regional symposia for neurologists and family practice physicians, publication of the journal *Headache* and sponsorship of the AHS Committee for Headache Education (ACHE). [www.americanheadachesociety.org](http://www.americanheadachesociety.org)

ABOUT THE AMERICAN MIGRAINE FOUNDATION
The American Migraine Foundation is a non-profit foundation supported by the American Headache Society and generous donors dedicated to the advancement of migraine research. The mission of this newly formed foundation is to support innovative research that will lead to improvement in the lives of those who suffer from migraine and other disabling headaches. [www.americanmigrainefoundation.org](http://www.americanmigrainefoundation.org)

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CONTACTS: Dennis Tartaglia dtartaglia@tartagliacommunications.com
(732) 545-1848

Joyce Yaeger Joycey@mbooth.com
212-539-3238
917-783-6105