HEADACHE MORE COMMON AFTER MILD TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY THAN AFTER MODERATE TO SEVERE INJURY

LOS ANGELES, June 20, 2012 – Headache is a significant problem and is more frequent in persons suffering mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) than after moderate to severe TBI, according to new research being reported this week at the 54th Annual Scientific Sessions of the American Headache Society. This is among many timely research findings concerning headache, migraine, and brain injuries on the four-day agenda here which runs through Sunday morning, June 24.

The researchers also found that headache prevalence was high in these patients and remained significantly high for as long as one year post injury, said lead study author Sylvia Lucas, MD, PhD, of the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle.

“We have known that headache is the most common physical symptom after traumatic brain injury,” she said, “but we wanted to study headache prospectively including whether severity of injury had an impact in prevalence.”

Patients in the study experienced either mild TBI or moderate to severe TBI caused primarily as a result of motor vehicle accidents. Evaluated by phone at three, six, and 12 months post injury, patients with mild injury were more likely to report new or worse headache than individuals with moderate to severe TBI.

“These findings should caution us to not underestimate seemingly milder head injuries and to take all brain trauma very seriously,” she said, noting recent CDC statistics showing dramatic rise in the number of emergency room admissions for teens who experienced sports-related concussion.

Others in the University of Washington research team include Jeanne M. Hoffman, PhD, Kathleen R. Bell, MD, and Sureyya Dikmen, PhD.

Some 500 of the world’s most eminent migraine and headache specialists are expected to attend. This year’s theme, “Planting the Seed for Future Headache Research” will spotlight 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.

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Migraine is one of the most ancient and mysterious of diseases with many myths and folklores attached to its diagnosis and treatment. Over the last 5,000 years, migraine sufferers subjected themselves to an array of extreme and bizarre treatments to find relief, said Elizabeth Loder, MD, president of the American Headache Society. These have included drilling a hole in the skull to let out the “bad humours,” bloodletting, sorcery, binding a clay crocodile to the head, and inserting the bones of a vulture into the nose.

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).  

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.

CONTACTS:  
Dennis Tartaglia dtartaglia@tartagliacommunications.com  
(732) 545-1848  
Joyce Yaeger Joycey@mbooth.com  
212-539-3238  
917-783-6105