

The Pharmacist's Role in Headache Management

Migraine guideline developed by Dane County health care providers

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Migraine headache is a chronic, episodic condition characterized by repeated debilitating attacks of severe headache, usually one-sided and pulsatile, and often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, photophobia, and other symptoms. Classical migraine is associated with prodromal symptoms, which may manifest as visual disturbances, tingling or numbness, or hemiparesis, and are referred to as aura; common migraine usually lacks these prodromal symptoms.

The estimated prevalence of migraine is approximately 18% in women and 7% in men, and the highest prevalence is in middle age (30-49 years). There is an inverse relationship between household income and prevalence of migraine. Patients with migraine are more often absent from school or work due to their headaches, and half of the migraine patients in a recent survey reported that their productivity at work or in school was decreased by half or more on days with headache. The economic impact of migraine is felt in absenteeism and decreased productivity, as well as a greater number of physician visits, emergency department visits, diagnostic tests, and prescription drug costs. The direct and indirect costs of migraine in the United States have been estimated at billions of dollars annually.

Many patients with migraine can attain meaningful reductions in headache frequency, intensity and duration with appropriate medical management. Appropriate management includes teaching the patient to avoid migraine triggers, developing an acute treatment protocol, creating a rescue plan, and initiating prophylactic therapy when indicated. This strate-

gy is designed to empower patients to effectively deal with their headaches and to reduce reliance on Emergency Department/Urgent Care visits for pain management. A new migraine guideline has been developed by a team of Dane County health care providers with the intention of giving primary care providers the information necessary to manage most migraine patients without the need to refer them to specialists or specialty clinics, where the capacity to take on new patients is seriously constrained.

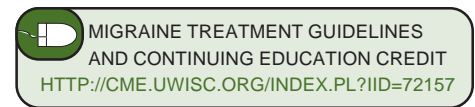
Pharmacists may use the guideline to help identify patients who are not getting adequate management of their migraines and to make recommendations for improved treatment. For example, a patient who is using a large quantity of triptans or D.H.E. but is not getting any prophylaxis could be identified as a good candidate for prophylactic therapy. If a patient is using NSAIDs for headache treatment with inadequate relief, one may recommend reevaluation of the patient's diagnosis and perhaps a switch to triptans. A patient who is frequently visiting the emergency department may benefit from the development of a home rescue plan. The pharmacist can evaluate the completeness of a patient's current regimen. The pharmacist may help the primary care provider to select the most appropriate treatment plans for migraine patients through understanding of the various drugs available and the issues associated with their use. ●

REFERENCES

1. International Headache Society. Classification and diagnostic criteria for headache disorders, cranial neuralgias and facial pain. *Cephalalgia* 1988;8:1-96.
2. Lipton RB, Stewart WF, von Korff M. Burden of migraine: societal costs and therapeutic opportunities. *Neurology* 1997;48(3 Suppl 3):S4-9.
3. Lipton RB, Stewart WF, Diamond S, Diamond ML, Reed M. Prevalence and burden of migraine in the United States: Data from the American Migraine Study II. *Headache* 2001;41:646-657.

New Clinical Practice Guideline and Web-Based CE Credit Available

ACPE Pharmacists interested in improving their migraine headache management skills can access a new resource from the UW Health Web site. The following link will take you to a new clinical practice guideline designed to assist health care providers in the care of their patients suffering from migraine headache. Use this link to access pharmacy CE as well.



Upon accessing the Web site, you will be asked to sign up for an account, and then register for the course by clicking on "log in." You will receive an e-mail confirming your registration. Then read the instructions and proceed through the document by clicking on the arrows labeled "Next" or by clicking on the section headings in the right-hand column. At the end of the document, click on "Quiz" in the right-hand column. Answer the questions in the quiz, then fill out a brief course evaluation, and a printable certificate will appear documenting your participation in the program if you have passed the quiz. Two contact hours (0.2 CEUs) of ACPE continuing education credit are available for this program.

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