Headache Simplified

Dawn A. Marcus. Harley, Shrewsbury, UK, 2008, softcover, 208 pp, \$36.66 CND, ISBN 978-1-903378-67-0

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"Headache Simplified" is a small paperback book that serves as a concise and practical reference for diagnosing and managing headaches. The author, an expert neurologist in the field, incorporates an evidence-based approach throughout this well-written book.

Tables are used to a large extent throughout the text to summarize important concepts. This feature makes the book useful for quick reference, as information can easily be found in this format. Another of this book's strengths is the author's use of concise and practical stepwise approaches to the differential diagnosis and management of headache. The approaches are graphically depicted in an algorithm format. Each chapter concludes with a useful summary of key points.

The book is organized into ten chapters. Chapter 1 begins with the epidemiology of headaches and clearly conveys the prevalence of this complaint in the general population. Emphasis is placed on classifying types of headaches into either a primary (migraine, tension-type, and cluster) or a secondary category (infection, inflammatory, intracranial, medication-related, musculoskeletal, neuralgia, and systemic illness).

Chapter 2 summarizes the relevant history, physical findings, and laboratory investigations specific to headaches. Red flag symptoms that should trigger further detailed investigations are discussed. Chapter 3 is devoted to differentiating between primary and secondary types of headaches. Chapter 4 briefly summarizes the pathophysiology of chronic headaches and examines the pharmacological mechanisms by current class of medications used to treat

headache. Chapter 5 describes acute and preventative therapy treatments for primary headaches. This chapter also describes that point in time when the primary care provider should refer to a specialist.

Chapter 7 provides a much needed evidence-based approach to complimentary and alternative therapies that will prove valuable when dealing with all of those "Google searches" which patients increasingly throw a practitioner's way. Chapter 8 addresses headaches in children and women. The section on children is rather cursory; however, I found the section on treating headaches during pregnancy and breastfeeding particularly useful. Chapter 10 covers the topic of headaches in the elderly, specifically trigeminal neuralgia, temporal arteritis, and post-herpetic neuralgia.

Unfortunately, there is very little mention of postdural puncture headaches (PDPH). This is particularly disappointing with respect to the diagnostic section, where it would have been useful, especially for the non-anesthesiologist reader, to mention the association between PDPH and the size and type of spinal needle used to obtain cerebrospinal fluid.

Neurologists and general practitioners are likely the target audience of this book. Even so, "Headache Simplified" could also be a useful resource for the anesthesiologist when considering the differential diagnosis of headache, especially if faced with a patient labeled as "PDPH". Similarly, this book could be a useful resource for specialists in Pain Medicine.

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