

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-17720-8 — Emergency Headache

Edited by Serena L. Orr , Benjamin W. Friedman , David W. Dodick

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Emergency Headache

Diagnosis and Management

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Diagnosis and Management

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University’s mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107177208
DOI: 10.1017/9781316819388

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First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd., Padstow, Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data
Names: Orr, Serena L., editor. | Friedman, Benjamin W., editor. | Dodick, David, editor.
Title: Emergency headache : diagnosis and management /
edited by Serena L. Orr, Benjamin W. Friedman, David W. Dodick.
Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2017. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017032479 | ISBN 9781107177208 (hardback)
Subjects: | MESH: Headache Disorders – diagnosis | Headache Disorders – therapy |
Headache – etiology | Emergency Treatment
Classification: LCC RB128 | NLM WL 342 | DDC 616.8/491025–dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017032479>

ISBN 978-1-107-17720-8 Hardback

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Preface

Headache is one of the most common reasons for emergency department visits. The patient with headache presents a challenge to the emergency clinician, given the very long list of diagnostic possibilities. The emergency clinician must be able to recognize life-threatening causes of acute headache and generate a judicious differential diagnosis. Investigations should be ordered with discernment, balancing the importance of identifying life-threatening causes of headache with resource utilization and cost considerations, given the ubiquity of headache in this setting.

There is a lack of accessible, evidence-based literature that provides an approach to the diagnosis and management of headaches in the emergency department. The dearth of resources, coupled with the complexity of headache as a presenting symptom, renders it challenging for clinicians to provide timely access to best-practice care in this setting. We hope to bridge this gap with this book. As clinicians with experience in evaluating and managing patients who present to the emergency department with headache, we recognize the need to rapidly make an accurate diagnosis. This book has been designed to assist the busy clinician with this objective. It is the result of collaborative work between a large number of headache experts, with representation of specialists from both Neurology and Emergency Medicine. In this way, the book strives not only to provide an evidence-based approach to headache in the emergency department, but also to provide a balanced approach considering the perspective of both the neurologist and the emergency physician. In addition, although the primary aim of this work is to provide clinicians with evidence-based information, there are scenarios in which the headache literature provides little guidance on how to approach patient management. Where these scenarios arise, we have

drawn on expert opinion to provide guidance to the clinician who must manage the patient despite the lack of an available base of evidence.

The book opens with an introduction to the problem of headache in the emergency department. We then summarize pertinent epidemiological facts about headache in this setting. The next two chapters provide readers with a practical approach to the history and physical examination as well as investigations for headache while highlighting clinical pearls and how to target the assessment to the patient scenario. We then aim to provide an overview of secondary headaches in the emergency department and give a detailed review of the primary headache disorders in the emergency department, given their high prevalence in this setting. Several subsequent chapters provide practical guidance on how to approach special patient populations that present to the emergency department with headache. Finally, we review evidence for strategies to prevent headache recurrence in patients with primary headache disorders who have presented to the emergency department, as well as guidance on preventing initial and return visits.

We are very grateful to all of the authors who contributed their clinical expertise, knowledge of the literature, and invaluable time to create comprehensive, reader-friendly, and evidence-based chapters for this book. We would also like to acknowledge the collaborative nature of the work required to write this book, seeing it was carefully written and reviewed by a large number of experts from Neurology and Emergency Medicine. In this way, we are confident that it will provide emergency clinicians with a practical, accessible, balanced, and evidence-based resource to assist in delivering the highest level of patient care.