Sinister Headache Diagnosis and Management

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King’s College Hospital
London
Q1. What is the impact of the headache on the sufferer’s daily life?

ETTH

Q2. How many days of headache does the patient have every month?

Migraine/CDH

Q3. For patients with chronic daily headache, on how many days per week does the patient take analgesic medications?

Migraine

Q4. For patients with migraine, does the patient experience reversible sensory symptoms associated with their attacks?

Exclude sinister Headache (<1%)
Red flags: Sinister headaches

- Age > 50 y at onset
- Additional features
  a) Acute symptoms - rash, temperature - scalp tenderness
  b) Between attacks persistent - symptoms - signs
- Abrupt onset, especially with accompanying vomiting
Case 9

Female, 48 y - Headache for 1 week continuous
- Green nasal discharge
- History – recurrent sinusitis

Rx
- Amoxicillin
- Steam

3 weeks later
- Ambulance called to collapsed patient

Symptoms
- Confused
- Brisk left knee and ankle reflexes
- Right upper limb weakness
- Hard to assess cranial nerves
**Case 9**

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<th>Female, 48 y</th>
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**Rx**

- Amoxicillin
- Steam

3 weeks later

- Ambulance called to collapsed patient

**Symptoms**

- Confused
- Brisk left knee and ankle reflexes
- Right upper limb weakness
- Hard to assess cranial nerves

**Cerebral abscess**
Case 10

Male, 65 y
- Retired
- Headaches most days last 3 months
- Wakes with them and goes to bed with them
- No headaches before
- Muscles aching
- Pain on chewing
- Malaise
- Weight loss 2 stone [28lbs]
- Depressed
- Headache is right-sided and scalp feels tender to touch
Case 10

Male, 65 y

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Cranial arteritis
Case 11

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<th>Male, 48 y</th>
<th>Headaches 1/6 months since 18 y</th>
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<tbody>
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Subarachnoid haemorrhage
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<td><strong>First symptom</strong></td>
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<td><strong>At 30 min</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2 months later</td>
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Case 12

Female, 44 y - Fundraiser
- Headaches for 2 y: 1/ mo

First symptom - Zig-zag lines left vision

At 30 min - Left frontal pain radiating to nose
- Throbbing
- Worse with exertion
- Severe
- Nausea
- Photophobia and phonophobia

Rx - Paracetamol + metoclopramide
- Less effective recently

2 months later - Aura without headache
- Bumping into objects on left

Tumour
Female, 15 y

- Headache all day – never had headache before
- Temperature elevated
- Mother called 6:25 pm
  ? Measles

GP visit

- Rapid deterioration
- Neck stiffness
- Nondescript rash
- Confused
| Case 13 |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| **Female, 15 y** | **Headache all day – never had headache before** |
|                 | **Temperature elevated** |
|                 | **Mother called 6:25 pm** |
|                 | **? Measles** |
| **GP visit**    | **Rapid deterioration** |
|                 | **Neck stiffness** |
|                 | **Nondescript rash** |
|                 | **Confused** |
|                 | **Meningitis** |
**Case 14**

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<th>Secretary</th>
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<td>Monthly headaches for 30 y</td>
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**Symptoms**

- Wakes with bifrontal pain
- Pounding
- Worsen on exertion
- Photophobia
- Extreme lethargy once headache subsides
### Case 14

**Female, 43 y**
- Secretary
- Monthly headaches for 30 y

**Symptoms**
- Wakes with bifrontal pain
- Pounding
- Worsen on exertion
- Photophobia
- Extreme lethargy once headache subsides

**Migraine without aura**
Benign headache

Acute
- Migraine
- ETT TH
- Other

Chronic
- Benign
- <4h Cluster
- >4h CDH
- Other
Red flags: Sinister headaches

- Age > 50 y at onset
- Additional features
  a) Acute symptoms - rash, temperature - scalp tenderness
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