

IN THE NEWS: SURGERY FOR MIGRAINE?

Research presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons in October 2009, and previously published in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* suggests that a technique performed in plastic surgery can dramatically reduce the painful symptoms associated with migraine.

Lead researcher Bahman Guyuron (University Hospitals Case Medical Center, Cleveland, OH, USA) first noticed over a decade ago that cosmetic surgery, which removed 'trigger points' from around the head, alleviated migraine symptoms. Since then, he has completed over 1,000 procedures on patients with migraine. In a study that followed up 69 such individuals over 5 years, 88% of the patients reported that their symptoms were alleviated throughout the duration of the study, 29% of the study group reported total elimination of their migraines and 59% of the patients reported a substantial decrease in their symptoms and frequency of migraine headaches.

"This data has provided strong evidence that severe migraine headaches and their painful symptoms can be successfully treated with surgery" remarks Guyuron (*Daily Express*, 26 October 2009).

A note of caution has been raised, however, by Robert Kunkel (Cleveland Clinic, OH, USA), who states that "this may be a techniques that will help a number of migraine patients who have responded to botox, but it's certainly not a procedure for generally treating migraines" (*CNN*, 4 August 2009).

Susan Haydon of The Migraine Trust also points out that "surgical procedures such as the removal of muscles or 'triggers' remain experimental in nature" (*The Scotsman*, 31 July 2009). She goes on to say that "we still need multiple randomized controlled trials to be conducted to give the necessary data on the long-term safety and efficacy of ... the surgical procedure before [surgery] can be recommended as a treatment for migraine."

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