



R U D E R • F I N N

Client :	JANSSEN - CILAG
Publication :	TODAY
Section/Page :	Singapore News / 8
Date :	25 May 2007
Headline:	A headache to suffer in silence

A headache to suffer in silence

Migraine sufferers may have increased likelihood of stroke

SHERALYN TAY
sheralyn@mediacorp.com.sg

HER migraines were so debilitating that Ms Foo Sok Leng missed a total of 100 days of school during her crucial A-level year. The disruption affected her studies so badly that she had to retake her 'A' levels twice, both times unsuccessfully.

Ms Foo is just one of the estimated 400,000 Singaporeans that suffer from migraines – many of them in their 20s and 30s and a majority of whom are women. And even more Singaporeans – 1.7 million – suffer from headaches.

According to the first large-scale headache survey here, many migraine and headache sufferers suffer in silence.

Of 600 patients surveyed by the Headache Society of Singapore, almost half endured their conditions for over five years without finding relief and had at least four headaches a month.

Some 12 per cent had migraines so severe that they missed more than seven days of work, school or social activities a month. And instead of going to the doctor, about 23 per cent of the respondents self-medicated with painkillers – which

may lead to cases of abuse.

Medication over-usage will lead to patients being unresponsive to "what normally works in the past" as the headache frequency escalates, said Dr Charles Siow, a neurologist and the president of the society.

"In fact, many patients take eight, 10 Panadol a day for one, two years before coming to see me," he said.

Preventive migraine therapy is a more effective solution for chronic sufferers, he said.

"Patients are candidates for prevention therapy if their migraine recurs and interferes with their everyday functioning, or if they experience more than four days of migraines a month," he said.

And if the pain, nausea, light and sound sensitivity aren't distressing enough, migraine sufferers may also have increased likelihood of stroke compared to non-migraine sufferers, said Dr Siow.

"Some studies have shown that in brain scans of patients with frequent migraines, there are more white spots in the brain that seem to be correlated to the severity of the migraine. The more migraines they have, the more spots they have," he said.

However, he added that the link between white spots and the occurrence of stroke is not yet proven.