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Headache Specialists Convene in Boston For 50th Annual American Headache Society Meeting

American Headache Society

BOSTON, June 26 -- Headache specialists meet today in Boston for the 50th annual meeting of the American Headache Society. Learn more about headache and face pain developments of the last 50 years -- including the top five advances in headaches -- and what researchers envision for the future.

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Among the topics being presented, include:

- **WHY PAIN BECOMES CHRONIC:** Research shows previously unknown role certain brain cells play in triggering chronic headaches for 9 million Americans
Think that pain medication is helping you ease the throbbing of a headache? Think again. Researchers discovered neurons are not the only carrier of pain signals to the brain. Glial cells, which outnumber neurons 20:1, have been shown to prompt chronic pain in a variety of ways, such as by a virus, nerve damage or even medication. Morphine and other opiates also activate glial cells, which mean those drugs you're taking to alleviate pain might actually be making it worse.
- **FIRST RIGOROUS TEST OF MAGNETIC STIMULATION DEVICE SHOWS PROMISE FOR SHORT-CIRCUITING MIGRAINES:** Research shows 7 million Americans could benefit from this treatment
Imagine simply zapping away the pain at the onset of a migraine, instead of gulping medication and waiting for relief. Researchers are presenting encouraging results showing a portable transcranial magnetic stimulation device would help an estimated 39 percent of migraine sufferers. The device, about the size and weight of a hairdryer, works by placing it to the back of the head and pushing a button twice, sending a very brief magnetic field pulse into the brain. The 16-site multicenter, randomized, double blind study is the first rigorous test of the magnetic stimulation device.
- **STIMULATING THERAPY THAT HITS A NERVE:** Early Research Shows New Implanted Device Helps Alleviate Near-Daily Migraines
Stimulating a nerve might be just the ticket to help relieve the pain of chronic migraine sufferers. Occipital nerve stimulation, in which an implanted neurostimulator sends electrical impulses to the central nervous system, has been shown to help 40 percent of near-daily migraine sufferers who don't have success with standard pain medication. Stimulating the occipital nerve, which ignites a tingling sensation, appears to activate mechanisms that block the perception of pain in the brain.

SOURCE American Headache Society

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