

History taking by world-leading headache experts

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The most important aspect of interviewing a patient with a headache disorder is taking the history. Everything that follows including the physical examination, investigations, treatments and management strategies flows from the initial history.

When taking the history it is very important to allow the patient to express their symptomology in their own words. Thereafter, the expert clinician will focus in on the historical details that deal with the headache in the first instance. If there any neurological symptoms, beyond headache, that are part of the patient's historical overview than the consultant can likewise focus on each of those symptoms. It is hoped by the time the interview is finished that the specialist will have a good idea as to the nature and causation of the headache. If so, then the physical examination can be directed towards diagnosing or reaffirming important historical data. Likewise subsequent investigation, immediate and long-term management will follow.

At this course, we have the opportunity of having to expert headache clinicians interview a patient, in this instance with translation, to demonstrate how historical information is gathered and utilized. It may seem that the physician is collating data and subsequently makes the diagnostic impression. However, is well known that physicians begin the diagnostic process from the minute they see the patient and continue this throughout the interview. Ultimately the history will guide everything.

At the end of the interview if the clinician is unable to come up with a specific historical diagnosis, then the best thing to do would be to repeat the history on another occasion. So listen them carefully as our two clinicians gather information and particularly learn as they speak out loud about what they are thinking as the process of history taking proceeds.

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Dr. Purdy is Past - President of the Canadian Headache Society. He is on the editorial boards of *Cephalalgia* and *Headache* and is on the Boards of the American Headache Society and International Headache Society. He is the Chair of the Scientific Program Committee of the American Headache Society and is Co-Chair of the Scientific Program for the International Headache Society in Boston in 2013.

He has received Excellence in Teaching Awards from his University on numerous occasions. He is the 2005 recipient of the *Arnold P. Friedman Distinguished Clinician Research Award* from the American Headache Society for outstanding contribution to the field of headache, and the *2007 Life Time Achievement Award* from the Headache Cooperative of New England. He was elected a Fellow of the American Headache Society in 2010 and is the current Treasurer of the American Headache Society.