Halting Headaches –
How the Pharmacist Can Aid Patients in the Community With Over-the-Counter Analgesics

Posttest/Rationale

1. Over-the-counter (OTC) headache medications
   A. Do not cause hepatic or gastrointestinal adverse effects
   B. Are endorsed by evidence-based guidelines as first-line treatment for episodic tension-type headache (ETTH) and mild-to-moderate migraine***
   C. Can be consumed 5 out of every 7 days by patients with ETTH or migraine without negative consequences
   D. Are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for oral, injectable, and intranasal administration

Correct answer: B
OTC products can cause hepatic or gastrointestinal issues, should not be used for more than 2 days per week by patients with headache, and are not available in injectable or intranasal formulations.

2. ETTH
   A. Occurs 15 or more days per month
   B. By definition does not prohibit an individual from performing their normal daily activities***
   C. Occurs primarily in the evening hours
   D. Always requires treatment with prescription medications

Correct answer: B
ETTH is 15 or few days per month, is not a predominantly nocturnal issue, and can respond to OTC therapy.

3. In terms of dietary changes, all ETTH and migraine patients should do which one of the following:
   A. Limit chocolate intake to 2 ounces daily
   B. Drink a beverage with at least 200 mg of caffeine daily
   C. Reduce their protein intake (e.g., red meat)
   D. Utilize their diary to help identify specific food items that may be contributing to their headache***

Correct answer: D
Diaries are the best option to identify patient-specific food issues. Controlled trials have not demonstrated that limiting chocolate or protein will benefit patients with headache, while controlled trials have demonstrated that the daily use of caffeine may exacerbate headaches.

4. Which one of the following is a biological marker useful for migraine diagnosis and assessment:
A. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
B. Serum serotonin levels
C. Currently no known biological marker exists for migraine
D. Non-contrast CT scans

Correct answer: C

Once pathological issues have been excluded, there is no diagnostic test to indicate a headache’s origin. In lieu of a biological marker, the International Headache Society’s (IHS) International Classification of Headache Disorders (ICHD) is accepted around the world as the conventional mechanism to identify primary headaches.

5. Regarding the International Headache Society’s migraine criteria, which one of the following is correct:
A. Unilateral pain that is aggravated by routine activity, as well as photophobia
B. Unilateral, claustrophobia, phonophobia, mild-to-severe pain
C. Pulsating quality, duration less than 3 hours, nausea
D. Unilateral, rhinorrhea, throbbing, aggravated with routine activity

Correct answer: A
Claustrophobia, duration less than 3 hours, and rhinorrhea are not listed in the criteria.

6. When counseling migraineurs, pharmacists should encourage
A. Patients to avoid non-oral medications
B. Every migraine patient to rest on a couch for a minimum of 4 hours during an attack and apply a cold compress to their forehead
C. Patients to consistently maintain a headache diary, which can be a valuable source of patient-specific information
D. Patients to ingest their OTC medications every day, regardless of whether they actually experience a migraine episode

Correct answer: C
Since no biological marker exists for migraine, all individuals experiencing migraine should maintain a headache diary because this provides patient-specific information. Oral medications are effective for migraine, couch resting/cold compress are not currently supported by the medical literature, and OTC medication use should be limited to 2 days per week.

7. The American Headache Society’s Choosing Wisely campaign recommends limiting OTC medication use to ______?
A. Two days per week, one dose per day only
B. Two days per week, although multiple doses are allowed on those days
C. Two days per month
D. Two attacks per week

Correct answer: B
The American Headache Society’s 2014 Choosing Wisely campaign contains this recommendation, “……OTC medication should be limited to no more than 2 days per week.” Two days should not be misinterpreted as 2 doses; multiple doses and even multiple medications can be consumed within the same day.

8. Which one of the following statements is TRUE:
A. Robust pathological research demonstrates that migraine results from vasoconstriction-induced ischemia
B. Migraine affects 3 times more men than women
C. Migraine symptoms are universally identical and never vary from patient-to-patient or even from episode-to-episode within the same patient
D. Migraine is a whole-brain neurological process manifesting in many symptoms, including head pain, intolerance of light and sounds, and a decreased ability to perform daily tasks

Correct answer: D
The pathology of migraine has not been fully elucidated, but ischemia is not implicated. Migraine primarily affects women and migraine symptoms vary among patients and among attacks.

9. Women are approximately ______ times more likely to have migraine than men?
A. 2
B. 3
C. 5
D. 7

Correct answer: B
Migraine affects approximately 30 million adults in the United States, of which 23 million are women.

10. According to the World Health Organization, migraine is which one of the following:
A. One of the top-5 illnesses worldwide
B. Caused by contaminated drinking water
C. Never encountered in third-world countries
D. Contagious among airline travelers

Correct answer: A
The World Health Organization ranks migraine headache, which affects 14.7% of the world’s population, as the third most common adult global illnesses.