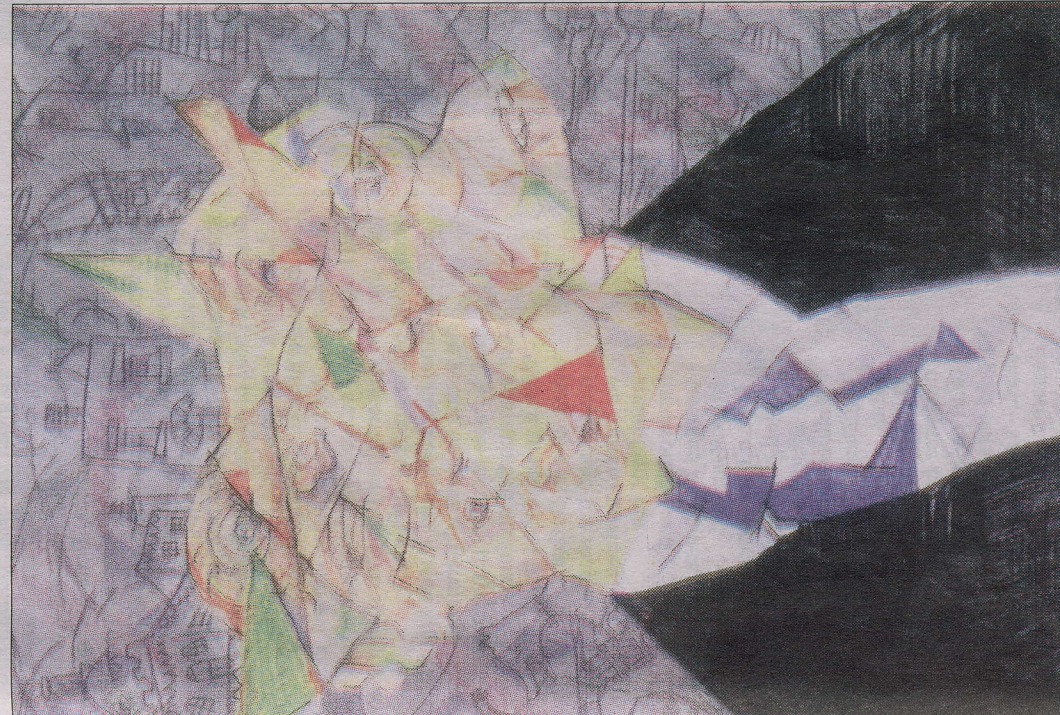


Experts muscle in on migraine site



JUST HEAD TO BED: This sufferer's painting is an example of distorted vision experienced during a migraine. Scientists are closer to finding a cure for this debilitating condition.

This week is International Migraine Awareness Week and a new breakthrough could make the condition more bearable for millions

SCIENTISTS have identified a "migraine gene", raising hopes of new drugs to nip the crippling headaches in the bud. Migraines feature in the World Health Organisation's top 20 most disabling lifetime conditions and affect one in eight men and women.

They lead to more sick days than any other illness – at a cost to the economy of more than £2 billion (£23bn) a year.

The intense headaches, which can be accompanied by nausea and visual disturbances, as well as sensitivity to light, can take up to three days to pass, and one in seven sufferers believes that time off due to migraines has affected their career.

With current drugs not effective or not suitable for all sufferers, the latest breakthrough could make the condition more bearable for millions.

An international research team, spearheaded by experts from the Wellcome Trust's Sanger Institute, in Cambridge, compared the DNA of thousands of migraine sufferers with that of other people.

This highlighted a genetic flaw that appears to raise the

Manage your headaches at work

migraine and also raising awareness about the realities of living with migraine will be addressed.

South African migraine surgery pioneer, Dr Elliot Shevel, says: "The pain associated with migraine can impact productivity and quality of life, through pain and through feelings of isolation."

Support and information is available free by medical staff at 0861 678 911. Free assistance is also accessible at www.headacheclinic.co.za, where sufferers can download ergonomic diagrams for computer and driving posture, and diet and medication diaries to help manage migraines. – Lifestyle Reporter

TO COMMEMORATE Migraine Awareness Week which ends on Saturday, the Migraine Research Institute and The Headache Clinic have launched a new campaign focusing on migraines in the workplace. The main focus is to raise awareness and encourage those affected to seek information and advice.

The campaign will concentrate on giving sufferers the tools to manage their migraines, work with employers to ensure migraines have minimal impact on their professional life and also voice their rights as employees. Factors such as educating employers on how they can support employees with

odds of the disease by allowing glutamate, a chemical that transmits messages in the brain, to build up in the junctions between brain cells.

Drugs that stop glutamate from accumulating could halt migraines, the journal Nature Genetics reports.

Although past research has identified genes linked to rare forms of migraine, never before has one behind the most common form of the condition

pick out this genetic variant. "This discovery opens new doors to understand common human diseases."

Professor Christian Kubisch, of the University of Ulm, Germany, said: "This research paves the way for new studies to look in depth at the biology of the disease and how this alteration may exert its effect."

Professor Peter Goadsby, trustee of the Migraine Trust, said: "The results of this large study of migraine sufferers brings us a little closer to understanding some fundamental aspects of the disorder, implicating an important chemical in the brain glutamate, which turns on nerve cells.

"Such findings bring hope for new research directions to find better treatments for migraine."

Earlier this year it emerged that a drug to relieve migraine attacks with fewer side effects was in the final stages of development.

The drug Telcagepant reduced the pain but didn't constrict the blood vessels.

This meant a reduction in dizziness, chest tightness and flushing, according to Norwegian and Swedish researchers. – Daily Mail

been found.

Dr Aarno Palotie, of the Sanger Institute, said: "This is the first time we have been able to peer into the genomes of many thousands of people and find genetic clues to understand the common migraine.

"Studies of this kind are possible only through large-scale international collaboration – bringing together the wealth of data with the right expertise and resources – so that we could