

Gary Behrend
Auckland
New Zealand

11 October 2007

Letter to the Editor

"A letter to your readers - those who mostly suffer in silence...

Take strength - A reprieve is at hand."

Is there a man alive who would not choose to CELEBRATE every possible moment of his life?
A rhetorical question, I hear your mumble... "of course not!"

But there are a group of us, who live in FEAR, rather than in celebration. A group who would absolutely embrace the opportunity to feel that we are in command of our lives, but whom know that a "silent persecutor" ominously weilds that key...

"Who are we?" I hear you asking...

We are the largely silent minority who suffer the guiles of MIGRAINE and related, crushing headaches.. A malevolence so intense, that we literally live in trepidation of "*when next*" it'll virtually squeeze the life-zest from even our innermost being; For when next it'll *lay us out*, useless to the world around us, and personally debilitated in body, mind, and sometimes even in the depths of our soul - to that *innermost-well*, which *houses* the will to live .

I have learned through the past fourteen years to call this a "silent suffering"...

"Why?" you're asking.

Because those who are non-sufferers, cannot but start believing that we are malingerers, and tire of our calls for help, our utterances of debilitation. And why wouldn't they?... To understand the next man's plight, we essentially *need to walk in his moccasins*. And who would choose to walk in ours!

Having accompanied me through my *prologue*, allow me now to introduce myself, and in *laymans* terms, to share my experiences of these past weeks of my life...

My name is Gary, and I'm a fifty-year old man, an educator - who relocated to New Zealand seven years ago. I'm Blessed with a natural love for my life, and choose always to invest myself wholesomely in what life so bountifully bestows. Only, since the onset of migraines some fourteen years ago, my energy and ability to joyously *plough* myself into my life, has steadily diminished.

My recent trip from Auckland to Johannesburg, to visit my kin, amounted to an initially agonizing twenty-eight hours of in flight-transit, where I found myself self-administering injections four times! And still, the pain would not be allayed - followed by my initial days in

Johannesburg, literally *on my back*, in a dark room.

My family, concerned by the harsh visual reality of seeing where I so desperately found myself, immediately phoned around to resource any possible help. *The Universe smiled upon us*, and I immediately took up with consultations at the Headache Clinic, under the leadership of Dr. Elliot Shevel, and numerous other highly qualified and experienced health professionals within its ranks.

My holiday in South Africa returned to full-zest, but of course - the awareness remained that migraine might fiendishly only be lurking in the backdrops, waiting to rear it's ugliest head... which it did - during my last week of holiday.

With a full-migraine status, I literally *crawled* back to the clinic, for Dr. Shevel to be able to make a full-assessment, whilst I was in a full-pain-state. His adept finger investigations were able to identify each key area of pain, and his light touch was able to initiate a sense of relief to each respectively.

Now, here's the enigmatic truth...

During my many years as a sufferer, I became convinced that I understood the anatomy of (migraine) headache perfectly. And from my numerous bouts of *wrestling* my way through days of pain, I'd frequently, literally "*sleep on my knuckles*" - convinced that the pain was deep within my head - and therefore I had to literally gouge my knuckles into my temples, as hard as I could, to numb that innermost painful aching.

Not so.

The brain itself is in fact devoid of nerves. It has no feeling, only the ability to translate feelings as experienced in the body.

The source of the pain is not actually within the brain, but in the musculature which surrounds the skull. But this pain is so incredibly intense, that it feels as if it originates at the very centre of one's head!

As such, it was a revelation for me, to discover that when Dr. Shevel lightly shut off the pounding of vessels with his fingers - in other words, the blood coursing towards the muscles around my skull - that a sense of relief was discernible.

Having identified therefore, that the source of my agony was in fact arterial, he was able to explain the syndrome under which I was suffering...

Basically - as I understand it - the scalp musculature in my head would in a migraine-state, go into a state of tension. The arteries would be supplying these muscles with blood, but since there was such high tension in the muscle fibres, the blood unavoidably pooled up in these inflamed arteries and pounded against the tight muscles, since it couldn't pass through into the muscle tissues.

The result, intense head pain and aching, which in turn could upset one's entire metabolism to a state of literally feeling "in shock" - *ripened* to a state of overwhelming nausea.

Joyous news! Help is at hand!

Dr. Shevel explained a surgical procedure which he has developed, whereby a number of the prime (headache-related) arteries are located, and then quarterised. The skull area is so well-supplied with blood circulation, that *dead-ending* a few would in no way, adversely affect blood supply. But their hitherto potential to pound, inflamed and pressurised with blood-supply, would henceforth be thwarted.

I was a definite candidate for this procedure. That night, I spent many hours sitting in a chair, unable to place my inflamed and exceedingly achy head even onto a pillow. It was not anxiety that kept me awake, but an eagerness to escape this current, relentless painful state, and to move towards the relief which would follow.

And it did!

Whereas I was almost nauseous with headache prior to the surgery, the relief was as discernible as day and night when I came to, in the recovery room.
And henceforth...

Whilst I am an inwardly religious man, ascribing all masterful design to He who bestows it, I know too that at times in our lives, we meet those who welcome and conduit the Master Designer's gifts to pass through them; Who pass on the talents and perceptiveness and insights which it takes to truly acknowledge what Wonder and Magnificence is possible - and may be bestowed upon us; What miracles are available to us, through the gifted hands and minds of others.

How Blessed was I, to stand in almost unbearable circumstances, in front of such an appropriately gifted physician, at what ironically would have seemed the worst possible time...

My letter to you, the editor, and the readers, is therefore with multiple yet singular intentionality...

To acclaim the brilliance which medical science brings us through those who relentlessly pursue new insights and procedures, in the best interests of others;

To let other suffers know, that you should never stop short of pursuing every avenue, every possibility - and that in similar instances of migraine to my own, that YES INDEED, help is available to you;

And to the Master Physician, ever so humbly giving Thanks for bringing me to the threshold of His very talented earthly colleague.

In closing, my very words to Dr Shevel, post operation had been "thank you, beyond words". The truth is, *some dimensions of life experience* are just beyond words. But Thank Heaven we have words too, to ensure that good messages of hope like this, can be passed on.

Very sincerely
I remain
Gary Behrend