

Dear editors of "Association of Headache Patients".

My name is Mireille Latten, I am 23 years old and had migraines for ten years. Why I can say "I had migraine", is because on 1 of May 2011 I flew with my husband to South Africa to undergo an operation for my migraines. I had read an article in your October issue, that stated "Migraine needs just a simple operation". After reading this article, I contacted Dr. Shevel and after e-mail correspondence between us, Dr Shevel informed me that he was certain that he could help me, and I decided to take the plunge.

My first migraine attack began when I was 13 years old. I remember it well, it was during gym class and I got a spot on my eye. At first I thought something was in it, but moments later the pain came. I can't remember how I managed to get home, but my mother knew immediately what had happened, because she has had migraines since the age of 6. Her attacks usually last for three consecutive days and nights every week. As a child I did not realise that my mother was almost always sick. For as any migraine sufferer knows, once the attack is over, your body is exhausted and needs time to get its energy back on track. Fortunately, Imigran tablets and syringes came on the market, reducing her attacks, and according to her she now has a reasonably good life.

Since my 13th birthday, the migraine attacks have become stronger, more frequent and longer. When I was 17 I was in 5 HAVO. For the final six months though, I hardly attended school because I had constant migraine. Then I continued to HBO. During the first year I had to stop my education. I was hardly ever at school. I had migraines every day. It could vary from 1 hour to several hours or even days. I could not sleep because of the pain. So by the time an attack was finally over, I was so tired that I needed two days to get my energy back, but there was not even time for that, because the next attack already started. I was always in bed or on the couch. If you have so many migraines, and I know I am not the only one, then you have no life. Because if you do have a good spell, then you have to use the time doing what you should have done during the attack. Your work suffers if you are able to have a job, but so does your social life suffer. Migraine patients, especially if you're like me and have migraines every day, are unable to plan your life and often have to cancel plans and appointments. Apart from the pain, this is also very frustrating. Apart from the pain, the worst thing is that I couldn't rely upon myself because my health constantly let me down.

We landed in in South Africa on 1 May, and on Tuesday 3 May was my first appointment at the Headache Clinic. That day went as follows, first I had an interview with the nurse who took a comprehensive history of my migraines. I told her how often I had migraines and where the pain was on my head. I also told her all the doctors I had already visited in the past 10 years without success. During the consultation they also induced a migraine attack so that I could show them where the pain was, so that they could diagnose what was causing the pain, and so that they could actually listen to the blood vessels that were causing the pain with an instrument called a Doppler Flowmeter. That day I also had a consultation with a Neurologist to rule out the possibility of there being a neurological problem contributing to the pain. Then they did x-rays to rule out any other problems that may have been contributing to the pain. They also measured muscle tension of the muscles on my head. They do this because you also can get a migraine from muscle tension. I then had a 3 Dimensional CT scan to locate exactly where the blood vessels were that were causing my migraine pain. That day I was also informed that I was eligible for the operation, and it was scheduled for May 4. The operation lasted

*1.5 hours. The operation is done under sedation, so that even though one does not feel anything, one can obey simple commands. I had 8 separate incisions, one for each artery*

*After surgery, I no longer have to take triptans as I no longer have migraine attacks! For someone who had migraines every day, this is truly a miracle. While writing this article I am still recovering, as the wounds on my head are still sensitive. The doctor has indicated that the post-operative pain can take up to 6 weeks to subside, but that pain is nothing compared to the migraine attacks.*

*During the two weeks that I was in Johannesburg, I was welcome to visit the clinic at any time if I needed to ask questions or if I was in pain, when they immediately gave me pain relief. For the first time in my life I felt that I was not just being treated like a number, and that they understood my suffering and took my complaints seriously. Dr. Shevel and his staff are extremely kind and understand your pain and your frustration. You are in good hands there.*

*So fellow sufferers, there is indeed a solution to get rid of your migraine attacks! I hope therefore that other doctors are interested in learning this method of migraine prevention. If you are interested, please contact Dr. Shevel, as he wants to transfer his knowledge so that people with migraines can be helped.*

*If there are people who have questions for me, then I will be happy to answer them.*

*Sincerely,*

*Mireille Latten*