

APRIL 2016 HEALTH TALK

TOPIC: HEADACHES

Headaches are one of the most common clinical conditions. Everyone must have experienced it at one point or the other in their lives. It is defined as an unpleasant sensation in the head.

The causes of headaches are numerous and range from common conditions like malaria, stress, sleep deprivation to grave illnesses like hypertension, migraines and brain tumors. It is therefore necessary to identify these sinister causes of headaches as they could be life threatening. Some people harbor brain tumors for many years without being aware. This is because headache is the most common symptom associated with this grave disease and can be easily dispelled by patients as being unimportant. They then present to the physician with very advanced disease that may not be amenable to treatment.

How then do we identify these grave causes of headaches? The answer is not clear-cut but some features associated with headaches that calls for concern include the following

1. Persistent headaches lasting for weeks, months or years
2. Headaches that tend to be worse in the morning
3. Headaches associated with vomiting, especially forceful vomiting
4. Headaches associated with visual disturbance or drowsiness
5. Headaches associated with weakness or inability to use one side of the body
6. Headaches associated with convulsions, especially when the convulsion occurs for the first time in adulthood
7. Very severe headaches described as a "thunderclap" or "the worst headache of my life"

Headaches associated with these features should not be handled lightly and such individuals should immediately present themselves to the hospital for thorough evaluation and early treatment, as this can go a long way in saving lives.

CMRS cares!!!