

PAIN SYMPTOM - General Practitioner History 'Checklist' for Patient Consultation

Clinical Example - MIGRAINE

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1) Location	unilateral headache
2) Radiation	whole left side including face
3) Onset – precipitating factor	mid afternoon with stressful job
4) Duration	12 hours
5) Course	persistent daytime, no sleep disruption
6) Character	pulsating quality
7) Intensity	8/10
8) Aggravating factors	stress and high workload
9) Relieving factors – Analgesia used	NSAID ibuprofen OTC, sleep
10) Other symptoms	nausea, vomiting, photophobia
11) Past History + Family History	past and family history of migraines
12) Red Flags ask	fever, neurology eg. weakness
13) Yellow Flags ask (a)ADL (b) sleep (c)family (d)work-finances (e)addictions	family relationships – partner, children
14) What matters most to patient	needs medical certificate for work

Is it true that 'a careful history will lead to the diagnosis 80% of the time'?

Georga Cooke – Australian Family Physician Volume 41, No 7, July 2022

Key facts (selected)

- The aphorism 'A careful history will lead to the diagnosis 80% of the time' appears to originate from a 1975 paper by Hampton (BMJ 1975; 2:486-9), which examined a consecutive sample of new patients seen in a weekly medical clinic over a 4 month period. Each patient had been referred by the general practitioner. After reading the GP referral letter, clinicians were asked to give up to 3 differential diagnoses, rating their confidence in each possible diagnosis. This process was repeated after taking the patient's history, and again after the physical examination. Two months after this initial visit, the patient's chart was reviewed to record the final diagnosis. At the end of the study, the history provided enough information to make the diagnosis in 66 out of the 80 patients (83%)
- The saying, 'a careful history will lead to the diagnosis 80% of the time' does remind us that carefully and attentively listening to our patients is both prudent and fruitful.