

after carotid dissection and subarachnoid hemorrhage and after intracranial surgery. The underlying theme appears to be that a traumatic event involving the pain-producing meninges can trigger a headache process that lasts for many years.

OTHER CAUSES In one series, one-third of patients with NDPH reported headache beginning after a transient flulike illness characterized by fever, neck stiffness, photophobia, and marked malaise. Evaluation typically reveals no apparent cause for the headache. There is no convincing evidence that persistent Epstein-Barr virus infection plays a role in NDPH. A complicating factor is that many patients undergo LP during the acute illness; iatrogenic low CSF volume headache must be considered in these cases.

TREATMENT Treatment is largely empirical. Tricyclic antidepressants, notably amitriptyline, and anticonvulsants, such as topiramate, valproate, and gabapentin, have been used with reported benefit. The monoamine oxidase inhibitor phenelzine may also be useful in carefully selected patients. The headache usually resolves within 3–5 years, but it can be quite disabling.

PRIMARY CARE AND HEADACHE MANAGEMENT

Most patients with headache will be seen first in a primary care setting. The task of the primary care physician is to identify the very few worrisome secondary headaches from the very great majority of primary and less troublesome secondary headaches (Table 21-2).

Absent any warning signs, a reasonable approach is to treat when a diagnosis is established. As a general rule, the investigation should focus on identifying worrisome causes of headache or on gaining confidence if no primary headache diagnosis can be made.

After treatment has been initiated, follow-up care is essential to identify whether progress has been made against the headache complaint. Not all headaches will respond to treatment, but, in general, worrisome headaches will progress and will be easier to identify.

When a primary care physician feels the diagnosis is a primary headache disorder, it is worth noting that more than 90% of patients who present to primary care with a complaint of headache will have migraine (Chap. 447).

In general, patients who do not have a clear diagnosis, have a primary headache disorder other than migraine or tension-type headache, or are unresponsive to two or more standard therapies for the considered headache type should be considered for referral to a specialist. In a practical sense, the threshold for referral is also determined by the experience of the primary care physician in headache medicine and the availability of secondary care options.

central gelatinous nucleus pulposus surrounded by a tough cartilaginous ring, the annulus fibrosus. Disks are responsible for 25% of spinal column length and allow the bony vertebrae to move easily upon each other (Figs. 22-1 and 22-2). Desiccation of the nucleus pulposus and degeneration of the annulus fibrosus increase with age and result in loss of disk height. The disks are largest in the cervical and lumbar regions where movements of the spine are greatest. The anterior spine absorbs the shock of bodily movements such as walking and running and, with the posterior spine, protects the spinal cord and nerve roots in the spinal canal.

The posterior spine consists of the vertebral arches and processes. Each arch consists of paired cylindrical pedicles anteriorly and paired lamina posteriorly. The vertebral arch also gives rise to two transverse processes laterally, one spinous process posteriorly, plus two superior and two inferior articular facets. The apposition of a superior and inferior facet constitutes a *facet joint*. The posterior spine provides an anchor for the attachment of muscles and ligaments. The contraction of muscles attached to the spinous and transverse processes and lamina works like a system of pulleys and levers that results in flexion, extension, and lateral bending movements of the spine.

Nerve root injury (*radiculopathy*) is a common cause of neck, arm, low back, buttock, and leg pain (see Figs. 31-2 and 31-3). The nerve roots exit at a level above their respective vertebral bodies in the cervical region (e.g., the C7 nerve root exits at the C6-C7 level) and below their respective vertebral bodies in the thoracic and lumbar regions (e.g., the T1 nerve root exits at the T1-T2 level). The cervical nerve roots follow a short intraspinal course before exiting. By contrast, because the spinal cord ends at the vertebral L1 or L2 level, the lumbar nerve roots follow a long intraspinal course and can be injured anywhere from the upper lumbar spine to their exit at the intervertebral foramen. For example, disk herniation at the L4-L5 level can produce not only L5 root compression, but also compression of the traversing S1 nerve root (Fig. 22-3). The lumbar nerve roots are mobile in the spinal canal, but eventually pass through the narrow *lateral recess* of the spinal canal and *intervertebral foramen* (Figs. 22-2 and 22-3). Neuroimaging of the spine must include both sagittal and axial views to assess possible compression in either the lateral recess or intervertebral foramen.

Pain-sensitive structures of the spine include the periosteum of the vertebrae, dura, facet joints, annulus fibrosus of the intervertebral disk, epidural veins and arteries, and the longitudinal ligaments. Disease of these diverse structures may explain many cases of back pain without nerve root compression. Under normal circumstances, the nucleus pulposus of the intervertebral disk is not pain sensitive.

APPROACH TO THE PATIENT:

Back Pain

TYPES OF BACK PAIN

Delineating the type of pain reported by the patient is the essential first step. Attention is also focused on identification of risk factors for a serious underlying etiology. The most frequent causes of back pain are radiculopathy, fracture, tumor, infection, or referred pain from visceral structures (Table 22-1).

Local pain is caused by injury to pain-sensitive structures that compress or irritate sensory nerve endings. The site of the pain is near the affected part of the back.

Pain referred to the back may arise from abdominal or pelvic viscera. The pain is usually described as primarily abdominal or pelvic, accompanied by back pain and usually unaffected by posture. The patient may occasionally complain of back pain only.

Pain of spine origin may be located in the back or referred to the buttocks or legs. Diseases affecting the upper lumbar spine tend to refer pain to the lumbar region, groin, or anterior thighs. Diseases affecting the lower lumbar spine tend to produce pain referred to the buttocks, posterior thighs, calves, or feet. Referred pain can explain pain syndromes that cross multiple dermatomes without evidence of nerve root compression.

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Back and Neck Pain

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The importance of back and neck pain in our society is underscored by the following: (1) the cost of back pain in the United States exceeds \$100 billion annually; approximately one-third of these costs are direct health care expenses, and two-thirds are indirect costs resulting from loss of wages and productivity; (2) back symptoms are the most common cause of disability in those <45 years; (3) low back pain is the second most common reason for visiting a physician in the United States; and (4) 70% of persons will have back pain at some point in their lives.

ANATOMY OF THE SPINE

The anterior spine consists of cylindrical vertebral bodies separated by intervertebral disks and held together by the anterior and posterior longitudinal ligaments. The intervertebral disks are composed of a