

at high doses. Verapamil can cause heart block by slowing conduction in the atrioventricular node, a condition that can be monitored by following the PR interval on a standard electrocardiogram (ECG). Approximately 20% of patients treated with verapamil develop ECG abnormalities, which can be observed with doses as low as 240 mg/d; these abnormalities can worsen over time in patients on stable doses. A baseline ECG is recommended for all patients. The ECG is repeated 10 days after a dose change in patients whose dose is being increased above 240 mg daily. Dose increases are usually made in 80-mg increments. For patients on long-term verapamil, ECG monitoring every 6 months is advised.

### NEUROSTIMULATION THERAPY

When medical therapies fail in chronic cluster headache, neurostimulation strategies can be used. Deep-brain stimulation of the region of the posterior hypothalamic gray matter has proven successful in a substantial proportion of patients, although its risk-benefit ratio makes it inappropriate with so many other options now available. Favorable results have also been reported with the less-invasive approach of occipital nerve stimulation, with sphenopalatine ganglion stimulation and with a noninvasive vagal nerve stimulator.

### PAROXYSMAL HEMICRANIA

Paroxysmal hemicrania (PH) is characterized by frequent unilateral, severe, short-lasting episodes of headache. Like cluster headache, the pain tends to be retroorbital but may be experienced all over the head and is associated with autonomic phenomena such as lacrimation and nasal congestion. Patients with remissions are said to have episodic PH, whereas those with the nonremitting form are said to have chronic PH. The essential features of PH are unilateral, very severe pain; short-lasting attacks (2–45 min); very frequent attacks (usually more than five a day); marked autonomic features ipsilateral to the pain; rapid course (<72 h); and excellent response to indomethacin. In contrast to cluster headache, which predominantly affects males, the male-to-female ratio in PH is close to 1:1.

Indomethacin (25–75 mg tid), which can completely suppress attacks of PH, is the treatment of choice. Although therapy may be complicated by indomethacin-induced gastrointestinal side effects, currently there are no consistently effective alternatives. Topiramate is helpful in some cases. Piroxicam has been used, although it is not as effective as indomethacin. Verapamil, an effective treatment for cluster headache, does not appear to be useful for PH. In occasional patients, PH can coexist with trigeminal neuralgia (PH-tic syndrome); similar to cluster-tic syndrome, each component may require separate treatment.

Secondary PH has been reported with lesions in the region of the sella turcica, including arteriovenous malformation, cavernous sinus meningioma, pituitary pathology and epidermoid tumors. Secondary PH is more likely if the patient requires high doses (>200 mg/d) of indomethacin. In patients with apparent bilateral PH, raised cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) pressure should be suspected. It is important to note that indomethacin reduces CSF pressure. When a diagnosis of PH is considered, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is indicated to exclude a pituitary lesion.

### SUNCT/SUNA

SUNCT (short-lasting unilateral neuralgiform headache attacks with conjunctival injection and tearing) is a rare primary headache syndrome characterized by severe, unilateral orbital or temporal pain that is stabbing or throbbing in quality. Diagnosis requires at least 20 attacks, lasting for 5–240 s; ipsilateral conjunctival injection and lacrimation should be present. In some patients, conjunctival injection or lacrimation is missing, and the diagnosis of SUNA (short-lasting unilateral neuralgiform headache attacks with cranial autonomic symptoms) can be made.

**DIAGNOSIS** The pain of SUNCT/SUNA is unilateral and may be located anywhere in the head. Three basic patterns can be seen: single stabs, which are usually short-lived; groups of stabs; or a longer attack

comprising many stabs between which the pain does not completely resolve, thus giving a “saw-tooth” phenomenon with attacks lasting many minutes. Each pattern may be seen in the context of an underlying continuous head pain. Characteristics that lead to a suspected diagnosis of SUNCT are the cutaneous (or other) triggers of attacks, a lack of refractory period to triggering between attacks, and the lack of a response to indomethacin. Apart from trigeminal sensory disturbance, the neurologic examination is normal in primary SUNCT.

The diagnosis of SUNCT/SUNA is often confused with trigeminal neuralgia (TN) particularly in first-division TN (**Chap. 455**). Minimal or no cranial autonomic symptoms and a clear refractory period to triggering indicate a diagnosis of TN.

**SECONDARY (SYMPTOMATIC) SUNCT** SUNCT can be seen with posterior fossa or pituitary lesions. All patients with SUNCT/SUNA should be evaluated with pituitary function tests and a brain MRI with pituitary views.

## TREATMENT SUNCT/SUNA

### ABORTIVE THERAPY

Therapy of acute attacks is not a useful concept in SUNCT/SUNA because the attacks are of such short duration. However, IV lidocaine, which arrests the symptoms, can be used in hospitalized patients.

### PREVENTIVE THERAPY

Long-term prevention to minimize disability and hospitalization is the goal of treatment. The most effective treatment for prevention is lamotrigine, 200–400 mg/d. Topiramate and gabapentin may also be effective. Carbamazepine, 400–500 mg/d, has been reported by patients to offer modest benefit.

Surgical approaches such as microvascular decompression or destructive trigeminal procedures are seldom useful and often produce long-term complications. Greater occipital nerve injection has produced limited benefit in some patients. Occipital nerve stimulation is probably helpful in a subgroup of these patients. Complete control with deep-brain stimulation of the posterior hypothalamic region was reported in a single patient. For intractable cases, short-term prevention with IV lidocaine can be effective, as can occipital nerve stimulation.

**Hemicrania Continua** The essential features of hemicrania continua are moderate and continuous unilateral pain associated with fluctuations of severe pain; complete resolution of pain with indomethacin; and exacerbations that may be associated with autonomic features, including conjunctival injection, lacrimation, and photophobia on the affected side. The age of onset ranges from 11 to 58 years; women are affected twice as often as men. The cause is unknown.

## TREATMENT HEMICRANIA CONTINUA

Treatment consists of indomethacin; other NSAIDs appear to be of little or no benefit. The IM injection of 100 mg of indomethacin has been proposed as a diagnostic tool, and administration with a placebo injection in a blinded fashion can be very useful diagnostically. Alternatively, a trial of oral indomethacin, starting with 25 mg tid, then 50 mg tid, and then 75 mg tid, can be given. Up to 2 weeks at the maximal dose may be necessary to assess whether a dose has a useful effect. Topiramate can be helpful in some patients. Occipital nerve stimulation probably has a role in patients with hemicrania continua who are unable to tolerate indomethacin.

### OTHER PRIMARY HEADACHES

**Primary Cough Headache** Primary cough headache is a generalized headache that begins suddenly, lasts for several minutes, sometimes