



Headaches (2nd edition): Fast Facts Series

Richard Peatfield and David Dodick. Published by Health Press (distributed by [Elsevier Australia](#)), 2002. ISBN 1903734215. Contains 104 pages. Price \$35.20

As its title suggests this book is indeed crammed with facts. The abridged textbook style makes for an easy read—particularly for the registrar or physician wanting to learn a lot in a short period of time. The chapters describing the epidemiology and the mechanisms of migraine provide an excellent, well-referenced overview of current knowledge. Similarly the chapters outlining the acute and prophylactic treatment of migraine are well laid out and evidence-based. The chapter on chronic daily headache contains a section on analgesic overuse headache, a common problem often overlooked in standard textbooks. Each chapter is supplemented at the end by a box containing useful key points.

In their introduction, the authors point out that the first task of any doctor dealing with headache is to identify the small number of patients where headache is a symptom of a potentially serious underlying condition. It may be for this reason that the first chapter of the book is dedicated to the differential diagnosis of headache. This chapter however may be the one chapter where the “fast facts” style works less well. Although the chapter provides comprehensive review of the alternate diagnoses one has to consider when assessing a patient with headache, the reader may still be left wondering what it is about the nature of the headache that alerts the experienced physician to these alternate diagnoses.

Despite this reservation, I would highly recommend this book to anyone wishing an up-to-date review of everything you every wanted to know about headache in less than 30 minutes.

Deborah Mason
Neurologist
Christchurch Hospital