

MEDIA RELEASE**13 December 2005****OVERUSE OF MEDICINES CAN INCREASE HEADACHES**

The majority of daily recurring headaches may be caused by commonly used painkillers. 'Medication overuse headache' is one of the commonest reasons people are referred to headache specialists, according to *Australian Prescriber*, which is celebrating its 30th year of publication.

In the December issue, Dr David Williams, neurologist from John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle, discusses how overuse of painkillers for headaches – including common over-the-counter painkillers – can cause headache as a withdrawal phenomenon.

“Medication overuse headache is estimated to be responsible for 30% of chronic daily headache, and accounts for 10-60% of patients attending specialist headache clinics” said Dr Williams.

“The condition is usually present for a long time before it is recognised and treated”.

Medication overuse headache is not a drug dependency but the patient keeps taking medicines to stop their headache coming back.

Those at greatest risk for medication overuse headache are patients with frequent migraines or tension-type headaches.

Treatment for the condition is withdrawal of the offending medication. This should be managed in consultation with a general practitioner to ensure the withdrawal is managed effectively and the possibility of relapse is minimised. Some people will need to be admitted to hospital to wean themselves off the medication.

For the complete article visit the *Australian Prescriber* website www.australianprescriber.com. *Australian Prescriber* is an independent peer reviewed journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals. It is published by National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS), an independent, non-profit organisation funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

For further information or expert commentary about this article please contact Anna Peppas at NPS by telephone on (02) 8217 8700 (bh) or 0419 618 365 (media mobile) or by email at apeppas@nps.org.au.