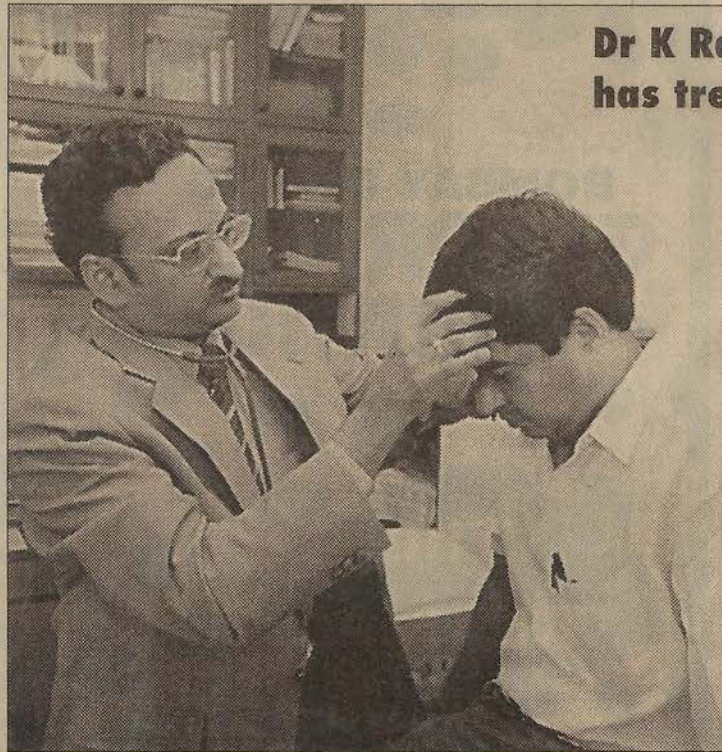


IT'S ALL IN THE HEAD

Dr K Ravishankar, possibly the city's only headache specialist, has treated over 2,000 patients in three years



Dr Ravishankar examining a patient in his clinic

By Shilpa Shet

- "People say I need to be given a box of Vicks as dowry."
- "I may not have my purse when I go out, but I definitely have my balm."
- "My mother suffers of headache at 50, but I'm already suffering at 19."
- "The sun is my biggest enemy. I fear the sun."
- "I burnt my skin when I was taking hot water fomentation."
- "I feel like standing in front of the running train and blowing my head off."

Healthfile

THESE statements will sound familiar to many. They are words commonly used by patients suffering from headache.

Dr K Ravishankar, possibly the city's only headache specialist, has a compilation of such words of pain spoken to him by

more than 2,000 patients whom he has treated in the last three years.

Headache, though a common malady, is neglected by most. "Most patients do not take adequate treatment for headaches," says Ravishankar. "They normally take an aspirin or some such painkiller. What needs to be done is to identify the headache and treat it accordingly."

Headaches are of two types - primary and secondary.

Secondary headaches are those which may be related to either tumours, meningitis or brain haemorrhage and constitute about five per cent of the total cases.

Primary headaches constitute 95 per cent of the headache cases and are of three types - migraine, tension type and cluster headaches.

Anita Bambhani had chronic migraine for six years. "I would take Saridon and, in due time, the ache would subside. I had almost started living with it when I was told of the headache specialist. Presently, I am feeling fine. I have had just two attacks in the last 12 days, when normally I would have had double the number." Migraine can be hereditary and can start the moment a person is exposed to certain foods, cold and so on. Tension-type headaches are induced due to certain malfunctions within the brain. The worst kind of headache, and luckily the rarest, is the cluster type.

"The pain is several times more than the migraine pain," says Dr Ravishankar. Deepak Padave, manager of Akbarallys,

Chembur, who bore the shooting pain recurrently for a month, says, "I tried different things, but nothing would give me long term relief. After being to the headache clinic, I have been completely cured. I haven't had such headaches in the last one year".

Both these people know that headaches are not curable. "I tell all my patients that headaches are not curable, but treatable. You can achieve 70 per cent success with medication and some pointers like yoga and early morning walks," says Ravishankar.

Patients, however, are not complaining. They are happy with whatever relief they can achieve. "Even this is big relief for patients who have comprehended suicide as the only alternative.

You will be surprised at the number of people who want to forsake their lives due to headaches," says Ravishankar.



**HEADACHES --
AT LEAST 90% OF US
HAVE THEM**

In fact, more people complain about headaches than about any other physical problem.

ALL HEADACHES ARE NOT THE SAME

For example, they may:

- cause mild pain, or unbearable agony
- occur once a month, or several times a day
- affect one side of the head, or both
- last for an hour, or for days.



Over three years, the concept has picked up.

However, the clinic cannot treat all headaches. Some patients have to be referred to psychiatrists

for further treatment.