

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 14, 2007

Robert E. Shapiro, M.D.
Associate Professor of Neurology
Given Building C219B
College of Medicine, University of Vermont
89 Beaumont Avenue
Burlington, VT 05405

Dear Dr. Shapiro:

Let me thank you for your efforts to improve knowledge and treatment of headache disorders in Vermont and nationwide. I understand that headache disorders are the most prevalent neurological disorders and that migraine is the most prevalent disabling neurological disorder. As you well know, migraine afflicts 12% of Americans, including more than 25% of middle-aged women and 19% of veterans of the Iraq war. A quarter of American families have members who suffer from migraine.

According to a World Health Organization assessment, headache disorders are collectively among the top ten causes of disability worldwide, and migraine alone is responsible for at least 1% of total U.S. disability.

Clearly, headache research has not been a priority of the National Institute of Health (NIH). Largely as a result of this inattention, few investigators choose research in headache disorders, few research developments in headache are reported in major medical journals, few quality grants on headache are submitted to the NIH for funding, and few clinicians choose headache specialty practice. Unfortunately, this means that the field of headache research is dominated by the pharmaceutical industry. It does not surprise me that little has been done, given the drug industry's emphasis on profit over public benefit. Indeed, I have learned that, over the past 40 years, only one innovative drug has been FDA-approved for the treatment of migraine. This lack of research funding for headache disorders has without a doubt prolonged the suffering of millions of Americans.

I support the call by the American Academy of Neurology, American Headache Society, World Health Organization, and eight other national and international organizations, for improved funding of NIH research into headache disorders. This should be commensurate with their population prevalence and their enormous impact on our national economic and disability burdens.

I look forward to working with you in the future on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
United States Senate