

# CASE STUDY: CHRONIC HEADACHE

## PATIENT:

34-year-old male referred to physical therapy for treatment of neck pain, bilateral neck spasm and chronic headache

**Medical history:** Patient was involved in an MVC (motor vehicle collision) in 2005 and has had persistent neck and head pain since. There are no significant co-morbidities.

**Subjective Complaints:** Patient is only able to sleep two hours at time; he consistently wakes up with a headache. Pain is aggravated by driving, using the phone, sitting in his truck and sitting at his desk. When his pain peaks, he must stop activity and rest.

### Initial Evaluation:

- Cervical flexion is limited.
- Strength of the upper extremities is normal.
- Palpation reveals multiple areas of tenderness.
- Visual Analog Scale (VAS) = 5/10.
- Pain throughout or present in posterior neck, side of head, forehead and face, as well as mid-back.

## TREATMENT:

The patient's treatment consisted of positioning, patient education in symptom reduction positions and postural exercises. A home exercise program was issued and given with instructions for performance throughout the workday, as well as at home.

At each visit, the patient's progress was discussed and his program was adjusted accordingly.

## RESULTS:

Within six weeks, the patient no longer woke with headaches. He was able to effectively control, reduce and eliminate his headaches. Cervical flexion was restored.

At the time of discharge, the patient reported rising each day without a headache for the first time since 2005. His worst pain report was less than 1/10.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GOOD SHEPHERD HEADACHE PROGRAM:

Contact Cynthia Bauer, PT, DPT, OCS, director, Musculoskeletal Outpatient Services, Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, at [cbauer@gsrh.org](mailto:cbauer@gsrh.org) or 610-776-3344.

*To schedule an appointment for headache therapy at a convenient Good Shepherd outpatient location, call 610-419-2130.*

