

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **SA Specialist Brings New Hope for Migraine Sufferers**

Globally recognised South African Maxillo-Facial and Oral Surgeon and Headache Specialist, Dr Elliot Shevel, recently published the results of research offering new hope for a dramatically improved quality of life for migraine sufferers.

Dr Shevel's research (published in the July 2007 edition of international medical journal, *Therapy*) describes major therapeutic benefits for migraine sufferers after the cauterisation of tiny branches of the external carotid artery, via a minor operation that can be carried out at a day clinic. Simply put, the procedure cauterises superficial scalp vessels that have long been empirically identified as a root cause of migraine pain.

Fascinatingly, the procedure Dr Shevel has now formalised through his research was first identified by Al Zahrawi in 936 AD, who described the exposure and division of the temporal artery for the relief of certain types of headache. The next medical record of the procedure occurred 500 years later, this time thanks to renaissance surgeon, Ambroise Pare, who actually carried the operation out on his own temporal artery to relieve his migraine pain.

Since then, this method of treating vascular headaches has been reported a number of times, in various countries, without ever becoming widely used or formalised within the structures of Western medicine.

“One of the reasons for this is that migraine and headaches generally fall within a medical grey area,” says Dr. Shevel. “Non surgeons often view any surgical intervention as unnecessarily invasive, and hence shy away from treatments outside of the pharmacological realm. At the same time, Neurologists have not been able to deal effectively with patient's suffering, as the condition falls well outside of their core focus areas. The result is that many sufferers have no other course than to take medication – even when pharmacotherapy is really not working at all and their quality of life remains severely impacted.”

Dr. Shevel's international reputation as a headache specialist and medical pioneer has grown over three decades of focus on head pain, which is notoriously difficult to treat due to the variety of root causes and symptoms associated with each individual case. Medical director at The Headache Clinic, Dr Shevel heads a multi-disciplinary team of practitioners dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of primary headaches and migraines. Dr. Shevel stresses the primacy of a multi disciplinary or holistic approach to dealing with migraine and other headaches in his work.

“No single medical specialisation is able to cover the range of psychological and physical dimensions that impact on, and are impacted by, severe headaches,” Dr Shevel says. “The holistic approach is essential for proper treatment and needs to take into consideration all possible options, from lifestyle adjustments to the benefits of minor surgery such as cauterization.”

Dr Shevel's procedure cauterizes tiny arteries under the scalp and leaves no noticeable scars. The study was conducted on 11 male and 42 female patients

suffering from chronic migraine. Two of the patients in the study suffered temporary loss of feeling in the skin around the area of the small incision. According to the research, “this resolved in both patients within six weeks of surgery.” Follow ups were conducted 12 months after the procedure, where patients confirmed that the reduction or elimination of pain was immediate, and that the pain had not returned over the period of the study.

Patients in the study - as with most migraine sufferers – had experienced a consistent lowering in their Quality Of Life (QOL) due to the intensity of migraine pain and related neurological, gastrointestinal and sensory symptoms. While the condition is notorious for being difficult to treat, it is a recognised fact that the QOL of migraine sufferers can be worse than in conditions such as arthritis and diabetes, and, is 'comparable to the level of dysfunction seen with recent cardiac infarction or congestive cardiac failure (heart attack).'

The figures in this paragraph are unimpressive, and could possibly be presented better. Patients in the study had their QOL tracked 12 months after the procedure. Role Function Restriction improved from 35.4% to 84.7%, Role Function Prevention improved on average from 33.7% to 77.1%, and Emotional Function improved from an average of 29.1% to an impressive 83.6%. These are the improvements that make the difference between a manageable condition and one that literally leaves sufferers unable to function through daily life, with or without medication.

“The option to have a safe and effective procedure at a day clinic to relieve the extreme symptoms of migraine will change many people's lives,” says Dr Shevel. “This is one of the first viable, tested alternatives to taking daily medication. When you consider that for many people medication is largely ineffective in dealing with migraine pain, the vascular surgery option expands the range of options dramatically. It offers more hope for what is often a truly debilitating condition. Ultimately, it means that a truly holistic approach to extreme headaches is more of an option than ever before.”

### **About Dr Elliot Shevel**

Dr Elliot Shevel, a Maxillo-Facial and Oral Surgeon with more than three decades of experience in the medical industry, is the founder and medical director of The Headache Clinic and is a specialist in the treatment and prevention of headaches. A globally recognised authority in this field, Dr Shevel has published and presented papers on headaches around the world and has co-authored many of his papers with world-leading neurologists such as Prof. E. Spierings, from the Department of Neurology, Harvard Medical School, and Prof. Di Tomasso of the International Headache Society.

As the medical director at The Headache Clinic, Dr Shevel heads a multi-disciplinary team of practitioners dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of primary headaches and migraines. Dr Shevel has a special interest in pain in the craniomandibular (jaw) and craniocervical (neck) regions, and in particular, primary headaches and pain of muscular origin.

Dr Shevel is the chairman of the South African branch of the International Headache

Society (IHS) and was elected an honorary Fellow of The International College of Craniomandibular Orthopaedics in recognition of his work in the field of headaches. He has presented papers at international conferences in ten countries and has published 14 scientific papers in respected peer reviewed South African and international Journals (see below).

**He also sits on the peer review committees for the European Journal of Neurology and The Medical Science Monitor**

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#### **Dr Elliot Shevel: Published Research**

1. Paraesthesia of Upper and Lower Lips of Dental Origin. J of the SA Dent Ass. 1971; 26(3): 70,71.
2. Intra-oral condylotomy for the treatment of temporomandibular joint derangement. Int J Oral Maxillofac Surg. 1991 Dec;20(6):360-1.
3. EEG change after fitting a posture modifying appliance. S Afr Med J. 1998 Mar;88(3):282, 284.
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5. Understanding primary headaches. Medical Chronicle 2000; June: pp9-15.
6. Treating menstrual migraine. Medical Chronicle 2000; September: p18.
7. Migraine or tension headache? SAMJ 2000; 90: 869-871.
8. Headache – the dental connection. SADJ 2001; 56: 99-102.
9. A subjective assessment of pain and swelling following the surgical removal of impacted third molar teeth using two different surgical techniques. SADJ 2001; 56: 238-241.
10. Headache: Rational Drug Usage Using OTC Medicines. SA Pharmaceutical Journal 2001; April: 21-27.
11. Cervical muscles in the pathogenesis of migraine headache. The Journal of Headache and Pain. 2004; 5: 12- 13. Co-authored by Prof. E. Spierings, Dept. of Neurology, Brigham & Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School.
12. The Role Of The Extra Cranial Arteries In Migraine Headache: A Review - Cranio: The Journal of Cranio Mandibular Practice. 2004; 22: 132-136. Co-authored by Prof. E. Spierings, Dept. of Neurology, Brigham & Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School.
13. Craniomandibular muscles, intraoral orthoses and migraine. Expert Review of

Neurotherapeutics. 2005; 5(3): 371-377. (Invited article)

14. Effects of amitriptyline and intra-oral device appliance on clinical and laser-evoked potentials features in chronic tension-type headache. *Neurol Sci.* 2005 May;26 Suppl 2:s152-4.

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#### **About The Headache Clinic:**

The Headache Clinic offers specialised medical treatment for headaches to ensure a better quality of life for people who suffer from chronic and episodic headaches and migraines.

This treatment is based on a holistic approach to headache science that co-ordinates the knowledge of a multidisciplinary team of medical experts, sophisticated computerised diagnostic equipment, and extensive research and development capabilities.

The Headache Clinic was established by Dr Elliot Shevel, a Maxillo-Facial, Oral Surgeon who specialises in the treatment and prevention of headaches. He has more than three decades of medical experience, is recognised as a world authority in headache treatment and prevention, and is also the chairman of the South African branch of the International Headache Society (IHS)

Dr Shevel leads the clinic's team of medical specialists, surgeons, doctors, nurses and technicians. This team takes a comprehensive medical approach to evaluating and treating headaches of all kinds that identifies and addresses the underlying causes of the pain. The Headache Clinic helps patients to break the link between headache symptoms and the factors that trigger them, so that they do not need to live with their headaches or migraines.

Headache sufferers have turned to The Headache Clinic for effective treatment and personalised care since it was established in 1992. The Headache Clinic is the treatment arm of the South African Institute of Headache & Migraine Science and is a member of the International Headache Society.

For more information you can visit [www.headacheclinic.co.za](http://www.headacheclinic.co.za)  
<<http://www.headacheclinic.co.za/>> or call 0861 678 911

Ima Peter | PR Account Executive  
t/ +2711 803 0030 | f/ +27866146190 | c/ +2776 119 4109  
e/ [ima@ideaengineers.co.za](mailto:ima@ideaengineers.co.za) <<mailto:dima@ideaengineers.co.za>> | w/  
[www.ideaengineers.co.za](http://www.ideaengineers.co.za) <[blocked::http://www.ideaengineers.co.za/](http://www.ideaengineers.co.za/)>  
Equity House, Cnr 5th Ave & Rivonia Boulevard, Rivonia  
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