

A pill to prevent migraine? Discovery of migraine gene could put it on the horizon

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The discovery of a gene for migraine holds great promise in the quest for new approaches -- possibly even a pill -- for preventing the disease, says a panel of experts presenting data at the annual scientific meeting of the American Headache Society. So far, there is no therapy that prevents an attack.

Guy A. Rouleau, MD, whose Canadian and British research team was first to sequence the gene for migraine last fall, says for the first time since the [discovery](#) of the triptans in the 1980s, [investigators](#) seeking to develop new migraine therapies are excited about the possibility of preventive drugs for migraine. Triptans act by constricting blood vessels in the brain which in turn inhibit [pain](#) receptors which can block migraine in some patients. They are e not considered preventative therapies.

"We may be moving toward developing about a pill that would block the brain's pain channel that reacts to stimulation and causes pain in migraine," says Dr. Rouleau. "Sequencing the gene not only allows us to understand the disease – it also opens understanding of the pain pathways that trigger migraine pain." Dr. Rouleau is director of the CHU Sainte-Justine Research Center and Full Professor in the Department of Medicine of the Université de Montreal.

"For the first time in decades, I have seen great interest by the research community," he said, "including the private pharmaceutical industry in developing preventive migraine therapies."

Dr. Rouleau is part of a panel on "Migraine and Genetics" devoted to discussing the implications of sequencing the gene for migraine. The session will be at 9:45 am, Friday, June 3. More than 500 migraine specialists in clinical practice and research from around the world attend the annual session which this year focuses on "New Discoveries in Headache Medicine," chaired by R. Allan Purdy, MD, of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

"The discovery of a gene for migraine with aura last fall was important because it confirms the longstanding observation that migraine "runs" in some families," Dr. Purdy said. "The presence of genetic factors in a common form of [migraine](#) holds promise for developing an effective treatment."

Provided by MBooth & Associates

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