

Medical News

Oh My Aching Head: Migraine Treatment at CMC

Imagine having a migraine headache – with the side effects of eye pressure, nausea, double vision and more – four to seven times per week. Imagine going through that, with increasing intensity, for more than 20 years. Then imagine having all of that vanish in a matter of minutes.

That's what happened to Nancy Drouin, who had the SPG block procedure at Catholic Medical Center June 23rd. "I've had one migraine since," said Nancy six weeks after the procedure. "It's been wonderful."

The SPG (short for sphenopalatine ganglion) block is a minimally invasive, outpatient procedure which delivers a concentrated dose of lidocaine, a pain reliever, to the group of nerves at the root of migraine, face, and head pain. The procedure takes about 20 minutes, is virtually pain free and has no required preparation.

Nancy and her husband, Roger attended a recent community talk at CMC, "Headaches Be Gone," to learn more and "my husband said, 'you have nothing to lose.'" Her headaches were triggered by multiple culprits, including the weather and her allergy to MSG, a common food preservative. She had already tried multiple medication regimens, periodic IV treatments, chiropractor visits, and meditation, all with limited success. "The only thing I hadn't tried was yoga."

"Everyone's migraine story is unique – what causes them, what they feel like, what works for treatment, and how all of that changes over time," said Joseph Ullman, MD, with Southern New Hampshire Radiology Consultants who administers the SPG block at CMC. "Most patients who have this treatment find significant relief, and in some cases it happens almost immediately. The SPG block can also be repeated as necessary."

Nancy admits she was nervous going into the procedure, but "as the medication was taking effect I could feel the pressure



Nancy Drouin found relief from persistent migraines with the SPG block at CMC.

relieving on my eyes, my head. The nausea was going away and I was instantly starting to feel better."

Nancy, a newlywed, still takes a daily maintenance medication but marvels at all of the things she's been able to do in the absence of persistent migraines. "(My husband) and I have been able to go out to dinner, which we haven't in a long time. I'm able to focus. I don't curl up with the blanket every night after work and wait for the next dose of medication to get some sleep." 