

## 4.2 Primary cough headache

Previously used terms:

Benign cough headache, Valsalva-manoeuvre headache

Description:

Headache precipitated by coughing or straining in the absence of any intracranial disorder.

Diagnostic criteria:

- A. Headache fulfilling criteria B and C
- B. Sudden onset, lasting from one second to 30 minutes
- C. Brought on by and occurring only in association with coughing, straining and/or Valsalva manoeuvre
- D. Not attributed to another disorder<sup>1</sup>

Note:

1. Cough headache is symptomatic in about 40% of cases and the large majority of these present Arnold-Chiari malformation type I. Other reported causes of symptomatic cough headache include carotid or vertebro-basilar diseases and cerebral aneurysms. Diagnostic neuroimaging plays an important role in differentiating secondary cough headache from 4.2 *Primary cough headache*.

Comment:

Primary cough headache is usually bilateral and predominantly affects patients older than 40 years of age. Whilst indomethacin is usually effective in the treatment of primary cough headache, a positive response to this medication has also been reported in some symptomatic cases.