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# NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Study Emphasizes Link Between Light Sensitivity and Migraines

*Light Found to be a Trigger in Migraine Patients*

(New York City; June 18, 2010) The strong summer sun could be keeping migraine sufferers indoors. But while scientists have long known about the link between bright lights and migraines, the actual cause of why light triggers or worsens migraine headaches has not previously been found until recently. A study conducted by scientists in January of this year at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) in Boston found that an optic nerve transmits light signals that trigger the pain experienced by migraine patients.

The study was conducted using migraine patients who were completely blind, having no ability to see light or visual images, and another group who were legally blind that could not see images but could sense and detect light. Light triggered pain only in the patients who were legally blind since the optic nerve in the patients who are totally blind does not carry light signals to the brain. Additionally, recently discovered retinal cells that contain melanopsin photoreceptors, the only remaining light receptors in legally blind patients, play a critical role in this process that triggered migraine pain (BIMDC).

"Studies show that the optic nerve that carries light signals to the brain, triggers a response of pain in migraine patients that can be associated with migraine headaches," said Audrey Halpern, MD, board-certified in headache medicine by the United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties, and board-certified in neurology by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

"About 85 percent of migraine patients have a condition known as **photophobia, or extreme sensitivity to light**. Patients who suffer from migraines will often retreat to a dark room following the onset of pain. Even in the absence of light, however, pain will not subside for about 20 to 30 minutes after the migraine begins," Dr. Halpern continued.

In the coming summer months, when sunlight is strong, migraine sufferers should take caution in protecting their eyes to avoid triggering the optic nerve associated with transmitting light signals. "Although there is no cure for migraine headaches, especially after bright light signals have been transmitted to the brain, there are small steps to prevent the pain that is caused by this light transmission. Protective eyewear that completely blocks UVA, UVB and UVC rays and effectively manages light is essential for migraine and headache sufferers who spend time outdoors, which we all do more of in the summer months. If you have a light sensitivity that triggers your migraines, be sure to wear protective sunglasses to manage light impact," Dr. Halpern concluded.

*For a complete list of common migraine triggers, visit Dr. Halpern's website: [www.audreyhalpernmd.com](http://www.audreyhalpernmd.com).*

### **About Dr. Halpern and The Manhattan Center for Headache and Neurology**

*After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine with her MD, Dr. Audrey Halpern completed an internship in internal medicine at Yale University, along with her neurology residency training at Yale. Following her stay at Yale, she completed fellowship training in headache medicine at the Jefferson Headache Center at the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia. Dr. Halpern is board-certified in headache medicine by the United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties, and board certified in neurology by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. Dr. Halpern, who is also a Clinical Assistant Professor of Neurology at New York University School of Medicine, diagnoses and treats a variety of neurological disorders, including headache, back pain, neck pain, pinched nerves, neuropathy, seizures, stroke, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and others conditions. In addition to treating adults, Dr. Halpern specializes in treating headache disorders in adolescents and pre-teens. Dr. Halpern is also a member of the Brain Injury Association of New York State.*

*With a belief in a combination of treatments for migraines such as behavior modification, conventional medication and holistic approaches, Dr. Halpern offers unique, advanced methods to treating and preventing migraines. She has co-authored a book chapter on migraine and epilepsy, has written numerous articles on the subject of migraine, frequently lectures on headache and other neurology topics, and is an expert in the field of concussion and sports related head injury. In addition to Dr. Halpern's recent appearance on Fox 5 NY as an authority on concussion, she has also been featured and quoted in Family Circle, Woman's Day, Town & Country, Health magazine, My Family Doctor, Big Apple Parent, and on the NFL radio network.*

*Dr. Halpern practices concierge style care, offering in-practice visits at The Manhattan Center for Headache and Neurology in addition to house calls. The Manhattan Center for Headache and Neurology is located at 15 East 40th Street, Suite 201, New York, NY 10016, and Dr. Halpern can be reached at 646-648-3793, or through her website, [www.audreyhalpernmd.com](http://www.audreyhalpernmd.com).*

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