

[Can You Sense A Migraine?]

In a Sentence |

A representation of the experience of a migraine, and a guide to help others help migraine sufferers.

In A Paragraph |

Migraines affect about 37 million people, and they impair your ability to do just about anything once it onsets. Migraines can be frustrating because there's no one cause, and there's no one treatment either. One of the first things doctors will tell you to do is to record what happens when you get a migraine: from what food you are eating to how much sleep you are getting to your physical and mental activity, because each person has a different experience concerning migraines. I would like to create an exhibition that shows the experience of what it's like to have a migraine and to inform people of the different triggers, symptoms and treatments as there are so many different forms. I would also like to share how they can help their family and friends through their suffering.

Context |

Research :

There are about 100 million people with headaches in the U.S. and about 37 million of these people have migraines. Migraines are considered primarily headaches because the pain isn't caused by another disorder or disease such as a brain tumor. Some cause pain on just the right side or left side of the head, others result in pain all over. Migraine sufferers may have moderate or severe pain and usually can't participate in normal activities because of the pain. The World Health Organization suggests that 18 percent of women and 6 percent of men in the U.S. suffer from migraines.

Migraines typically last for at least four hours, but can also last for days. The time someone is affected by a migraine considers the stages before and after the migraine as well: the build-up phase, and a post-drome that can last one to two days.

One of the hardest parts about migraines is that people have different triggers and different symptoms. Some common symptoms are throbbing pain, light sensitivity, sound sensitivity, sensitivity to smell, nausea, blurred vision, stiff neck, and dizziness. Migraines with aura can cause changes in vision. Sufferers experience seeing flashes or bright spots. Although an exact cause is unknown, brain scans show

Research Continued :

that migraines may be due to “hyperactivity” in parts of the brain. Actually, a migraineur’s brain is biochemically different than that the brain of a person without this disorder. Since there isn’t one clear treatment for migraines, and each person’s experience with them are so varied it’s hard to know what’s causing them and how to help them. Because of this, the first thing the doctors normally do is ask their patient to start a documenting each migraine. It’s important to document eating habits, sleeping habits, how long they lasted, and so forth.

There are graphics out there that show the different triggers, and the do / do not things for when you get a migraine. There are also graphics on the different pressure points that can be helpful, or the different areas of the body affected from a migraine. There are plenty of articles out there suggesting different treatments, but before you decide what treatment is best for you, you have to be able to diagnose your case. Typically MRIs don’t help find the solution, because migraines typically aren’t symptoms of brain tumors. It’s important to create a relationship with your doctor to have them help you try to diagnose your personal experience.

There are journaling / documentation websites for people that suffer from migraines. One being Migraine Meter on migraine.com. This is a good source where you can log your information from severity to symptoms to additional notes. This is a good example of how to document your migraine, but one downfall is that it’s on a website with a copious amounts of information, and you have to go through 3 navbar sections before you get to the migraine meter, and it’s more difficult to fill out on the phone being on a website, not an app.

From here I looked at different journaling apps directly for migraines. I think it’s important to look at apps specifically for migraines, not just a dietary or sleep app, so that it asks specific questions doctors will want answered. I found one app that does a good job called Migraine Buddy. With this app, you create an account and you are able to create records, view your reports, look at a calendar, and share your results with your buddies. I think this app could be very helpful, but I think some of the information on the app is irrelevant and not needed. For example, I don’t think you need to be able to have friends, or “buddies” on this app to share your personal information with. I don’t find myself wanting to send my eating and sleeping habits with my friends, specifically pertaining to my migraines. However it could be helpful if you could share the information with your doctor. I think that other limited supplemental information could be helpful.

As this is an information design project, I’ve looked into a designer that specializes in information design, Nicholas Felton. Feltron includes annual reports, apps, databases, and lots more. His reports are shown through graphic representations, and vibrant colors. He has copious amounts of information in a manageable and delightful way. He works with statistics, maps, numbers, and displays it in an

Research Continued :

orderly fashion. Daytum is one of his main projects which was developed to allow anyone to quickly capture personal data and easily share the results. Profile pages include a variety of charts, visualizations and colors that can be applied to customize the data representation.

Audience :

My audience for this project are people that do not get migraines. This audience isn't aimed at a certain age. People typically don't get migraines under the age of 7, so this project will not be aimed about young children, but young children might enjoy this experience as I want it to be interactive. Women statistically are more prone to get migraines, but this project will not exclude males, either. The parents or guardians of the migraineur could also be part of the audience if the person experiencing the migraines is a young adult, wanting to understand the pain of their child. The targeted audience will benefit from the information shown about triggers and symptoms, and it will be interesting putting them in the experience of a migraine if they don't experience it themselves.

Tone |

I want the tone to be informative, helpful and understanding. I want to evoke empathy. I don't want the project to be dark, but I do want it to reflect what it's like to have a migraine. Having a migraine can be very intrusive and draining and I want that to be obtained when looking at this space, conveyed through my information and graphics.

Deliverables |

I conducted an eight question survey about migraines, asking them what their triggers, symptoms, treatments, family history, duration, and other questions. About 70 people responded to my survey. I then gathered that data, and create mindmaps and infographics documenting this content.

Originally I was inspired by Nicholas Felton's infographic designs. I think he has a strong design for visually representing content in a pleasing way. I like how he outputs graphs and charts, and other visuals to show them their triggers among other content that will be displayed. I also like how color is an important aspect of his work. I would like color to also play a large part in my project. However, after further research and exploration I do not feel as though using a style like Nicholas Felton is appropriate for representing migraines. Migraines are complicated and disruptive, and Felton's work does that reflect that concept. After gathering data, and converting content into visual representations, I will create a series of 20 posters, mini squares, where graphics resemble the feeling of a migraine to go along with content. I would like to still have white space to go along with the graphics since those will be so intense.

Deliverables Continued |

I want the space of the exhibition to reflect having a migraine. The placement of the posters themselves should not be perfectly organic. I think creating an interactive experience will be more interesting to engage in and a good way of providing sound and sensation. There could be flashing lights and high pitched sounds to resemble symptoms on a website. I think having this project as an exhibition can work in multiple ways of showing people not affected by migraines what suffering from them is like as well as I want to be able to help migraineurs in any way to help treat them in the moment and long-term. After experiencing the posters and website, I would like the audience to take away a book I design informing them how they could help someone suffering from a migraine. Giving them little tips such as adjusting the lights. I think this could be a good place to give someone this type of information after this experience.

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