



Ablation Technique Helps Relieve Constant Headache Pain

As **Nolan Tzou, MD**, Director of the Huntington Center for Pain Management understands it, Trevor Havlicek's injury and its aftermath are almost textbook examples of a whiplash injury. Four years ago, while playing goalie in an ice hockey game in Pennsylvania, the then 14-year-old was "checked" by two other players. When the two collided into Trevor, his head snapped back and struck the pole supporting the goal net. He then fell to the ground, his head striking the ice hard. With his vision blurred and ears ringing, Trevor was unable to stand and had to be carried off the ice. He was rushed to a local hospital.

For the first month following his injury, Trevor's mother, Patricia, reports that he seemed fine. Then, the headaches started. They were constant and severe,

"He could have a headache for four months straight," Mrs. Havlicek recalled. The headaches would be accompanied by eye pain and nausea so severe that Trevor would be unable to attend school. In the first two years following Trevor's accident, he visited seven neurologists. Each classified his headaches as migraines, but none of the medications they prescribed relieved the pain.

Two years ago, a neurologist finally pinpointed the source of Trevor's pain - damage to the occipital nerve. Trevor was referred to Dr. Tzou for a procedure that is not widely available. Known as radioablation, this technique uses microwave energy to inactivate the occipital nerve, which runs along the back of the head.

After his first treatment by Dr. Tzou, Trevor experienced "significant improvement," according to his mother. He underwent a second procedure and expects to continue to see results.

Dr. Tzou noted that because nerves may regenerate, patients treated with radiofrequency ablation, particularly younger patients like Trevor, may require subsequent treatments. However, their pain relief can be long lasting.

"Patients may experience relief of their pain for anywhere from months to years following a treatment," Dr. Tzou commented.

Now a freshman at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Trevor hopes to pursue a career in medicine. Just getting to the point he is at has been a struggle for the young man, who when he graduated Mt. Sinai High School in June was given the President's Award for his A average, a computer science award, as well as a school scholarship for courage. His achievements were all the more meaningful because the chronic headaches meant that he had to be tutored for half of his high school career.

With the veil of pain lifted, and his drive and intelligence intact, there is no telling what more Trevor will achieve.