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Migraine



Synopsis

The many manifestations of migraine can vary dramatically from one patient to another, even within the same patient at different times. Among the most compelling and perplexing of these symptoms are the strange visual hallucinations and distortions of space, time, and body image which migraineurs sometimes experience. Portrayals of these uncanny states have found their way into many works of art, from the heavenly visions of Hildegard von Bingen to Alice in Wonderland. Dr. Oliver Sacks argues that migraine cannot be understood simply as an illness, but must be viewed as a complex condition with a unique role to play in each individual's life.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Rev Exp edition (October 5, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 037570406X

ISBN-13: 978-0375704062

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #21,031 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in Â Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > Nervous System #34 in Â Books > Medical Books > Administration & Medicine Economics > Health Care Delivery #49 in Â Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Neuropsychology

Customer Reviews

After my migraines greatly escalated in frequency over the past year, I decided that it would be wise to get more information, hence the reading of this classic. First published in 1970, and revised in 1985 and 1992, *Migraine* contains a wealth of facts, case studies, ideas, and speculation relating to the complex, elusive phenomenon of migraine. Perhaps I should say 'phenomena', since no two migraines seem to be the same. Dr. Sacks has treated over 1000 migraineurs, and appears to have read and studied everything, ancient and modern, relating to migraine. I learned a tremendous amount about what afflicts me by reading this book, and I also unlearned some of what I thought I knew, such as that migraine aura is caused by a vasoconstriction, which is followed by a pain-producing vasodilatation (i.e. the discredited vasomotor theory of migraine). But, as with any good book written by an inspired, thoughtful author, *Migraine* is about much more than its principle

subject. Dr. Sacks is so well read and so fundamentally curious and enthralled by the universe he finds himself in, that the reader cannot help but be sucked along in his jet stream, learning about such things as the visions of Hildegard of Bingen, Dostoyevsky's epileptic ecstasies, Novalis' dictum 'every disease is a musical problem; every cure a musical solution', as well as chaos theory and self-organising systems. I found the only weak chapter to be the one entitled 'Psychological Approaches to Migraine'. It would be better entitled 'Psycho-analytical Approaches to Migraine' since in it Dr. Sacks seems to accept and promote the most bizarre and outrageous of the unscientific ravings of the 'Viennese witch doctor'. Oh well.

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