Sphenopalatine Ganglion Block

The Sphenopalatine Ganglion (SPG) is a bundle of nerves located in the back of the nose just posterior to the middle nasal turbinate. This ganglion provides the nervous groundwork for many areas of the face and head. It is felt to be responsible for the pain felt during Migraine and Cluster headaches as well as Trigeminal Neuralgia and facial pain.

A Sphenopalatine Ganglion Block is where local anesthetic medication is applied to these nerves to achieve neuromodulation (interrupting the chaotic signaling) of the sphenopalatine ganglion. These blocks have been performed for over one hundred years and have been very successful in treating headaches and facial pain. But the process has been difficult to perform up to this point as no effective delivery system was previously available. In the past, physicians would use a long needle to inject a local anesthetic through the side of the face. Some practitioners still use this approach. More commonly, the procedure is performed by using long, stiff, cotton-tipped applicators through the nose. These procedures were usually effective but were not preferred by patients or providers as they were uncomfortable and difficult. Now a “needleless” treatment device for chronic headaches, migraines and facial pain is available. A small, soft flexible tube (SphenoCath) specifically designed to deliver medication through the nose to the area of the Sphenopalatine Ganglion makes the procedure quick, simple and comfortable. Patients usually experience relief of an existing headache in minutes. An SPG block may restore you to normal function for days, weeks or longer.

What Should I Expect?

The patient will be placed on their back with their head tilted slightly. A topical anesthetic spray or gel is placed in the nose. The soft catheter will be gently inserted into the nose with state of the art fluoroscopic (x-ray) guidance to insure precise placement and adequate spread of the medication over the mucosa covering the ganglion area. Some patients may experience an unpleasant taste in their mouth or a temporary numbness in their throat after the procedure. Some feel a temporary difficulty swallowing, but this resolves in a few minutes. Many patients experience very little or no discomfort when the tube is inserted. Most patients can resume their normal activities within 20 minutes after completion of the procedure.