Transcript Details
This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: https://reachmd.com/programs/neurofrontiers/improving-migraine-diagnosis-in-vulnerable-populations/49218/

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Improving Migraine Diagnosis in Vulnerable Populations

Announcer:
Welcome to *Neurofrontiers* on ReachMD. Today, Dr. Juliana VanderPluym will be discussing findings from her recent study on factors associated with getting a migraine diagnosis among Arizona Medicaid recipients. Dr. VanderPluym is an Associate Professor of Neurology at Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, and she presented this study at the 2026 American Headache Society's Annual Scientific Meeting.

Let's hear from her now.

Dr. VanderPluym:
A couple things about our data were surprising. Social instability, with homelessness being one of the most common in the adult population and welfare custody being more common in the pediatric population, was linked to a lower likelihood of migraine diagnosis. This likely reflects barriers to continuity and history-taking rather than true differences in disease rate, since we know that literature shows that adverse experiences actually increase the risk for migraine. So the fact that they're getting a lower likelihood of migraine diagnosis is suggesting a disparity there.

I think these results are important because it comes down to being more intentional with diagnosis. Migraine diagnosis really relies exclusively on history. There are no tests we can do to prove someone has migraine. So when barriers are present, like language or social complexity, it may be easier to default to a nonspecific label that describes a symptom like headache rather than a formal diagnosis like migraine.

And the problem with that is that it affects access to appropriate treatment. So this is a reminder that we need to take the time, we need to use interpreters when needed, and we have to prioritize diagnostic accuracy, especially in more complex or vulnerable patients.

Announcer:
That was Dr. Juliana VanderPluym talking about how to navigate disparities in migraine diagnosis based on her research. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Neurofrontiers* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!

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