



# 2024 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

**SPEAKER****James Baraniuk, MD****TITLE & ORGANIZATION****Professor  
Georgetown University****TOPIC**

## How Migraine & Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) Are Connected

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) or chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is an underdiagnosed, disabling disorder characterized by severe fatigue and post-exertional malaise.
- ME/CFS and migraine often coexist, with up to two-thirds of ME/CFS patients meeting the criteria for migraine.
- There are no lab tests to diagnose ME/CFS; diagnosis is instead based on symptoms including fatigue, post-exertional malaise, cognitive issues, sleep disturbances, and orthostatic intolerance.
- ME/CFS is more common in women than men.
- The cause of ME/CFS is not well understood; genetic and environmental factors may be involved.
- Central sensitization, a process involving changes in the brain's pain processing, may contribute to ME/CFS and migraine symptoms.
- Migraine, fibromyalgia, and Ehlers-Danlos syndrome are often co-morbid with ME/CFS.
- Some migraine medications help with ME/CFS symptoms, but this may be because headaches can trigger ME/CFS.
- Collaboration between researchers studying ME/CFS and migraine is crucial to better understand the overlap between the two conditions and develop effective treatments.

### TREATMENTS CITED

Activity pacing	Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10)
Anti-inflammatory diet	Ergot alkaloids
Antioxidants	Hydration
Biofeedback	N-acetyl cysteine
Brain retraining	Occupational therapy
Carnitine	Pregabalin
CGRP monoclonal antibodies (mAbs)	Psychotherapy
Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)	Rest
Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril)	SSRIs
	Topiramate (Topamax)
	Tricyclic antidepressants

### QUOTES

*"[ME/CFS] is a disabling severe disorder where fatigue is the predominant feature, but another aspect that's important for diagnosis is to have post-exertional malaise. The fatigue should be present for six months and disabling so that a person can't do their usual activities. The post-exertional malaise refers to what happens after somebody does more exertion than usual."*

*"There is no FDA-approved medication or therapy for ME/CFS. The treatment generally begins by making the correct diagnosis."*

*"If you have chronic pain, then I would say it overlaps with fibromyalgia, so use the drugs that are approved for fibromyalgia. If you've got migraine, use the drugs approved for migraine."*

*"You have to pace yourself; you have to know when too much is too much."*

### PRACTICAL STEPS

- Advocate for yourself and educate others about the severity of ME/CFS and migraine.
- Prioritize your symptoms and address them one by one with your healthcare professional, working on the most severe issues first.
- Consider psychotherapy or CBT to help adjust to living with fatigue and to manage feelings like anger and anxiety associated with the condition.
- Consider participating in research studies or clinical trials to learn more about your condition and access specialized care.
- Manage your expectations, as it may be a slow process of addressing each symptom and working towards improved quality of life.
- Pace yourself and avoid overexertion. Don't try to do too much on good days, as it can worsen your fatigue and symptoms.
- Remember that rest is essential for managing chronic fatigue, so let go of guilt about it.