



# 2024 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

## SPEAKER

Richard B. Lipton, MD

## TITLE & ORGANIZATION

Professor of Neurology & Director of the  
Montefiore Headache Center  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

## TOPIC

Is Migraine Linked With Cognitive Decline  
or Dementia?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Migraine is a chronic disorder that should be treated as such to relieve burden and prevent long-term negative health effects.
- Migraine is a risk factor for dementia, with studies showing that people with migraine are about 33% more likely to develop dementia than those without migraine. However, a risk factor does not mean it is a cause of the disease.
- Risk factors for migraine and dementia overlap. Pain, stress, and inflammation are relevant mechanisms.
- Risk factors specifically for dementia include high blood pressure, a sedentary lifestyle, and inflammatory disorders.
- Causes of dementia can include Alzheimer's disease, multiple strokes, disorders like Lewy body dementia, or even B-12 deficiency or hypothyroidism.
- Stress and high levels of cortisol lead to volume loss in the brain and can lead to long-term cognitive problems.
- Effective acute treatment of migraine reduces the risk of having headaches worsen over time.
- Some preventive medications used to treat migraine can also have negative short-term cognitive side effects. Topiramate, amitriptyline, and nortriptyline are some examples.
- A person's health span refers to the number of years a person lives in good health, without the burden of disease, whereas life span refers only to the age at death, not the quality of the years of life. Diet, sleep, and exercise are things that we can control that can give us the best chance of a longer health span.
- More research is needed to fully understand the links between migraine and dementia.

## TREATMENTS CITED

Amitriptyline	Omega-3 fatty acids
Exercise	Sleep
Mediterranean diet	Topiramate (Topamax)
Nortriptyline	

## QUOTES

*"If you have migraine today and you use effective acute treatments, you change your lifestyle, use effective preventive treatments, you will certainly improve your life today. And you may well prevent trouble in the future, too, by reducing your risk of stroke, and reducing your risk of dementia, and reducing your risk of other negative health outcomes."*

*"If someone is in a period of increased stress, their cognitive performance may decline on a short-term basis. When the stress ends, they may fully recover. If someone is under chronic stress, that can be a risk factor for long-term cognitive decline."*

*"Many people have migraine at night that interferes with sleep. So pain itself can keep you from falling asleep or keep you from staying asleep. And something like one-third of people with migraine experience sleep disruption due to headaches at night."*

## PRACTICAL STEPS

- Seek effective acute and preventive treatments for migraine to improve your quality of life today and potentially reduce the risk of long-term negative health outcomes such as stroke and dementia.
- Adopt a healthy diet that includes plants, whole grains, fish, beans, and nuts (such as the Mediterranean diet), which has been shown to protect against dementia and may also help reduce the risk of migraine.
- Minimize processed food intake and aim for a diet higher in omega-3s and lower in omega-6s, as this has been suggested to be beneficial for both migraine and brain health.
- Prioritize lifestyle factors like diet, sleep, exercise, and stress management, which can help increase your health span, rather than just your life span.