



2026 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

SPEAKER

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TOPIC

How Early Life Stress Affects Migraine Risk

TITLE & ORGANIZATION

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- High-level trauma and lower-level household stressors impact neurodevelopment through biological pathways like the HPA axis and synaptic pruning.
- Trauma-informed clinical care, validating patient experiences, and the potential for societal-level prevention through early childhood support are imperative.
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) put one at a long-term risk of developing migraine and headache disorders.
- Neglect and emotional abuse may be the most potent risk factors for developing headache disorders like migraine.
- The more ACEs the child is exposed to in the first seven years, the higher their risk of developing migraine in adolescence.

KEY TREATMENTS

- Therapy

NOTABLE QUOTES

“With increasing exposure [to ACEs], the risk of developing migraine is higher, we are more confident that this may actually be a cause of developing migraine.”

“We found [that] in the first few years of life, having exposure to lower-level stressors in the home was associated with developing migraine as an adolescent.”

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Reflect on early life stressors and discuss them with your provider to explore whether more aggressive treatment might be appropriate for you.
- Try viewing current symptoms, such as sensory hypersensitivity or hypervigilance, as adaptive responses to past environments rather than personal deficits.
- Consider engaging with peer support communities or trusted individuals to build resilience and reduce the isolation often associated with trauma and chronic pain.
- If you have a known trauma history, consider prioritizing therapies that help regulate the HPA axis and sympathetic nervous system.