



2026 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

SPEAKER

Laura (Libby) Sebrow, PhD

TOPIC

Brain Fog & Dementia: The Science on the Cognitive Impacts of Migraine

TITLE & ORGANIZATION

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Research has shown that cognitive performance is worse during the head pain phase.
- Longitudinal evidence suggests that migraine does not lead to an increased risk of dementia or permanent cognitive decline.
- While some medications (like topiramate) have known cognitive side effects, the long-term cognitive impact of many migraine treatments remains under-researched.
- Imaging studies have shown abnormal activation and communication between brain regions that are involved in both pain and cognition.
- Objective testing has revealed decline in attention and concentration, processing speed, working memory, and executive functions during attacks.

KEY TREATMENTS

- Cognitive rehabilitation
- Cognitive stimulation (engaging in novel activities)
- Exercise
- Sleep hygiene
- Social interaction
- Stress reduction
- Topiramate (Topamax)

NOTABLE QUOTES

"These 'baby steps' really do matter and can build that momentum over time. And that's why it's so important to approach lifestyle changes with patience and flexibility."

"You don't feel like yourself. You feel like you're completely turned off and it can be so debilitating in how you function day to day and how you work, how you interact with people. Your work life, social life, if people are in school, and it really can completely change how a person even views themselves."

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Note exactly how cognitive symptoms manifest (e.g., word-finding, distraction, slow thinking) to provide clearer descriptions to clinicians.
- If new cognitive symptoms appear after starting a treatment, discuss dose adjustments or alternative options with a provider.
- Address factors like sleep and stress management, as they directly compete for the brain's cognitive resources.
- Build cognitive resilience by starting with small, manageable lifestyle changes — such as a five-minute walk and/or a slightly earlier bedtime; challenge the brain with novel activities and/or social interaction.