



# 2026 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

## SPEAKER

Tom Zeller Jr.

## TITLE & ORGANIZATION

Author | Editor-In-Chief  
*The Headache* | *Undark*

## TOPIC

Why Isn't There a Cure for Headache Disorders?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The lack of scientific interest and funding for headache disorders is what prompted journalist Tom Zeller Jr., who lives with cluster headache, to write his book *The Headache*.
- The author candidly shares some of his darkest personal experiences and his desperation to end the pain.
- Many neurologists receive as little as 10 minutes of formal education on headache disorders during their medical training.
- Cluster headache is often called "the most painful thing a human can experience," characterized by sharp pain behind one eye.
- Hope is growing due to a "sea change" of treatments like CGRP inhibitors (released in 2018), and emerging research into other neuropeptides involved with migraine, including PACAP and VIP, as well as neuromodulation devices.

## KEY TREATMENTS

- Capsaicin
- CGRP monoclonal antibodies (mAbs)
- Magnesium
- Neuromodulation devices
- Steroids
- Sumatriptan
- Verapamil

## NOTABLE QUOTES

*"I was just unlucky to have a disorder that affected less than 1% of the population, and it would be ludicrous of me to expect that interest, or really dollars, would flow to this disorder, given so many other impactful diseases out there."*

*"In some ways, cluster is more forgiving ... compared to migraine, because the symptoms are just so singular and with very little variation from patient to patient."*

## PRACTICAL STEPS

- Since headache specialists are rare, focus on building a strong "medical companionship" with your primary care physician, as they will likely be your main point of care.
- Consider being open with others about the reality of your pain, as this helps reduce social stigma and workplace misconceptions.
- Be extremely careful with dosages of "hand-me-down" drugs (like verapamil). Overmedicating out of desperation can lead to life-threatening side effects.
- Explore online communities to share experiences and find emerging treatments that others have found successful.