

Structure of the Meetings

So what will you do in your meetings? Are your meetings going to have an educational component to them? If so, planning the meetings will require additional effort. Some suggestions of topics include memory assessment and tips for improvement, treatment options- surgery and endovascular treatment and psychological issues during recovery from a ruptured aneurysm. Ask participants what they would like to hear about in support groups.

It seems monthly meetings, which last about an hour and a half to two hours are most beneficial. This frequency allows people to plan in advance. A group leader is necessary to maintain the flow of the meeting and prevent digression from a particular topic. It is also the recommendation that "the group leader" is a person with medical knowledge, such as a registered nurse, physician, or therapist.

Running a meeting is a learned skill, so don't feel discouraged if you're not perfect at it. It helps to have someone available who has done this before. Feel free to contact the foundation for assistance.

Our Mission

To provide support and educational materials to the medical community, the newly diagnosed, survivors, family members, friends and the general public regarding the facts, treatment options, and recovery process for brain aneurysms. With the help of the medical community, remain steadfast and earnest in the pursuit of brain aneurysm research that can directly benefit those affected.

About The Brain Aneurysm Foundation

The Brain Aneurysm Foundation was established in Boston on August 19, 1994, as a public charity. The Foundation developed from a close relationship between patients and healthcare professionals who identified the need for comprehensive information and support for brain aneurysm patients, their families, and the medical community.

The Brain Aneurysm Foundation, which you can keep current with at www.bafound.org, is the nation's only nonprofit organization solely dedicated to providing critical awareness, education, support and research funding to reduce the incidence of brain aneurysms.

THE BRAIN ANEURYSM



FOUNDATION

Brain Aneurysm Support Group: *Getting Started*

THE BRAIN ANEURYSM



FOUNDATION

The Brain Aneurysm Foundation

269 Hanover Street, Building #3

Hanover, MA 02339

781-826-5556

Toll free 888-BRAIN02

office@bafound.org

Introduction

This booklet is designed to help you start a support group for people affected by a brain aneurysm. A support group is a dynamic entity that constantly changes according to the needs expressed by participants.

The primary goal of the support group is to assist patients, family members and caregivers during the recovery phase of the illness following treatment for a brain aneurysm. Living with the aftermath of a brain aneurysm can be a traumatic experience for spouses, parents, children and other relatives.

Support groups allow those facing the challenges of a brain aneurysm to benefit from interaction and support from other people in similar situations. It is also helpful for the newly diagnosed to get information.

Social support is the component provided by interaction with other survivors. The survivor knows that other people, who are in different phases of the recovery continuum, understand and accept what they are experiencing. It is important for both the patient and family members to share their experiences with others in a similar situation.

Getting Started

There are some key things to consider when starting a support group:

- Determine the focus of your group.
- Seek assistance from medical experts, social workers or other clinicians who can provide consultation and meeting space, give presentations or facilitate meetings.
- Initial contacts may be obtained from existing support groups, nursing homes, hospitals, family physicians, neurologists, counselors and home care services. Contact The Brain Aneurysm Foundation for more information about starting a support group and to receive educational patient materials at office@bafound.org or 781-826-5556. We also can provide guidelines for potential meeting topics.

Frequency

Determine the frequency of the meetings. Most support groups try to meet at least once a month. It is important that the group meet consistently.

Location

- Plan a time, place and agenda for the first group meeting.
- Select a central location that is handicapped accessible and that may be close to public transportation. A healthcare facility is recommended, especially as healthcare professionals will be more accessible to the group.
- We do not recommend that the meeting location changes.

Marketing and Publicity

This is crucial to a beginning support group.

- Notify The Brain Aneurysm Foundation by email at office@bafound.org of all meeting dates, locations, and speakers. We will post your support group's meeting dates on our website and email those affected by brain aneurysms in your area with notice of your first meeting.
- Publicize your support group by distributing notification to local newspapers, radio and TV stations. Post flyers in local hospitals and neurosurgery departments and enlist their aid in reaching out to brain aneurysm survivors. Be sure to include information on the nature of the support group, the date, time and location of the meeting as well as contact information.
- Design a poster or flier that you can post in your community to let people know about the support group. Be sure to include the meeting location, date and time.

The group should be available to any brain aneurysm survivor and his/her family. We have also found that social activities for group participants help to bring people closer together. At a time when new approaches to the care of aneurysm patients are being explored, it is exciting and challenging to facilitate the recovery through education, research and support group programs.